TOPSY TURVY

By

VERNON BARTLETT

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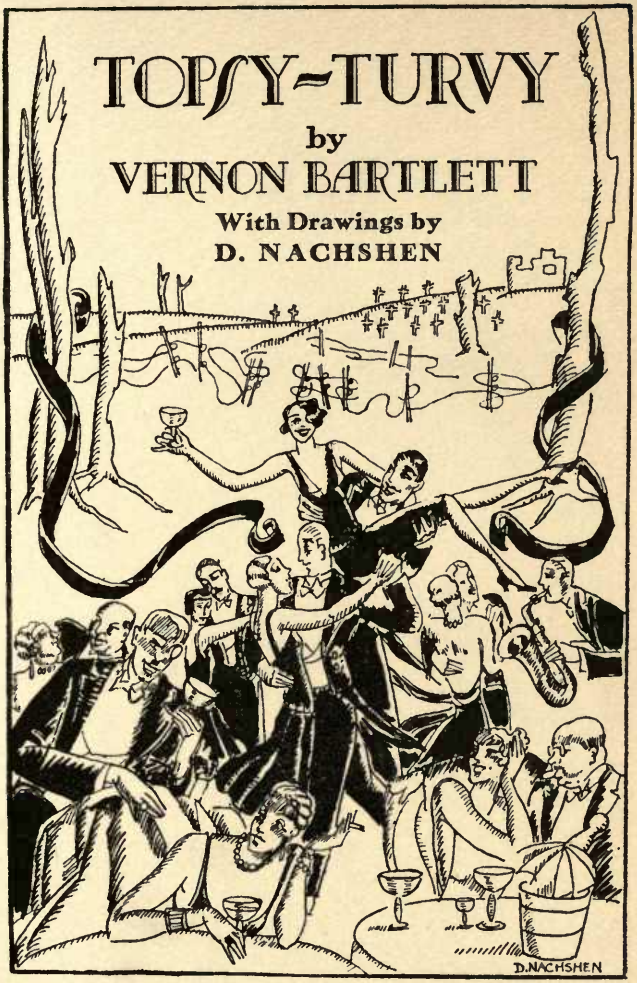

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This book is dedicated to the many people who have helped, by advice, information or encouragement, to bring it into existence, and, in particular, to my Wife, Mrs. Sanford Griffith, Dr. Jacobsson, Mr. H. R. Cummings, M. P. de Lanux, Dr. P. Zifferer, M. George Boncescu, Mr. Leonard Spray, and an anonymous writer in The Times Literary Supplement, *whose review of an earlier effort contained the seed from which "Topsy-Turvy" has grown.*

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Et les follets dansaient autour.

Et parlant avec des voix d'hommes, de femmes, de filles et d'enfants plaintifs, ils dirent, gémissant :

" Orgeuil, père d'ambition, Colère, source de cruauté, vous nous tuâtes sur les champs de bataille, dans les prisons et les supplices, pour garder vos sceptres et vos couronnes ; Envie, tu détruisis en leur germe bien de nobles et d'utiles pensées, nous sommes les âmes des inventeurs persecutés ; Avarice, tu changeas en or le sang du pauvre populaire, nous sommes les esprits de tes victimes ; Luxure, compagne et sœur de meurtre, qui enfantas Néron, Messaline et Philippe, roi d'Espagne, tu achètes la vertu et payes la corruption, nous sommes les âmes des morts ; Paresse et Gourmandise, vous salissez le monde, il faut vous en balayer, nous sommes les âmes des morts. . . ."

—*La Légende d'Ulenspiegel et de Lamme Goedzak.*

Preface

Destruction is so exhilarating. Few of us ever cease to revel in the ruthless mowing down of tin soldiers in the nursery, the crash with which the carefully constructed castle is razed to the linoleum-covered floor. Building may be fun, but it is not such fun as destroying. What human being would not walk, or even run, a mile to see a blazing factory or hotel?

I suppose this explains why we read with passionate interest a first-hand account of a great earthquake, and are bored to tears by an account of the reconstruction that follows the earthquake. It may be depressing that the courage with which a family, a race or a continent will defy disaster should be so much less interesting than the disaster itself, but facts are often depressing.

Every book dealing with the war was given a warm welcome—I wrote one myself, a very bad one, so I know. Most books dealing with the efforts of Europe to recover from the war receive no welcome at all except from the reviewers—I wrote one myself, less bad than the war book, so I know. H. G. Wells, in "The World of William Clissold," tells of an historical writer who was requested to write a scenario dealing with the general history of mankind, and was then asked by the film producer if he could not put a girl and a boy into the story, so as to "have a thread of human interest in it." The historian refused, but I, not enjoying the same position, cannot adopt the same attitude.

Therefore, in this book I have tried to give a picture of Europe during those years between the Peace Conferences of Paris and the real conclusion of peace which,

one hopes, may be said to date from the entry of Germany into the League of Nations, and I have tried to give "human interest" to this picture by presenting it in the form of fiction. People who have remained quietly in England since the war may think the stories that follow are exaggerated, but what pen could exaggerate the muddles and miseries of Europe's lean years, during which not merely individuals, but whole classes of society have disappeared in the struggle of mankind to adapt itself to new conditions?

The characters and incidents described in this book are fictitious: Ivan Deane is not

VERNON BARTLETT.

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Beppino and the Prime Minister

Beppino and the Prime Minister

I

WE read casually in our morning papers that the next international conference or meeting of Foreign Ministers of one sort or another is to take place at Lausanne or The Hague, Cannes or the Island of Prinkipo, and we express no astonishment. In a way, we welcome these odd meetings in unexpected places, since they help us to remember and distinguish between the different *étapes* of Europe's recovery from the war it asked for and got. At Brussels, we remember, there was talk about finance; at Spa about coal; at Barcelona and Porto Rosa about railways and such like matters. At Cannes, M. Briand played golf and lost his Premiership in consequence; at Genoa, Mr. Lloyd George and M. Barthou sat at the same table—a very big table—as Herr Wirth, the German, and M. Tchicherin, the Bolshevik; at

Locarno, everybody patted everybody else on the back and made history in a motor boat called the "Orange Blossom."

How much duller it would have been if all these meetings had merely been known as the First, the Third, the Thirty-First International Reconstruction Conference! And how much more complicated for the historian! We should never remember when Mr. Lloyd George first wore his velvet dinner jacket, or whether M. Briand first appeared in a top-hat at the Seventh or the Seventeenth Reconstruction Conference.

But, when we come to think of it, we wonder why these statesmen travel from one country, from one town, from one village, to another. One month they meet in Boulogne, one month at San Sebastian, and one month at Lympne. Nobody knows how such and such a place was first suggested—the name creeps into the newspapers, it is flashed from one country to another, Ministers agree to it because they imagine it is the spot preferred by most of their colleagues. Engineers arrive hurriedly to put up special telephone wires to facilitate communications with the various capitals, secretaries of embassy meet in friendly competition to procure the best rooms in the place for their chiefs, hotel managers joyously double their prices and pray, generally with success, that agreement will not be reached without long delay.

The choice of Bellagio as a suitable spot for a conference was due to a coincidence, although the month —May—made the choice of some such place probable. "I wonder where we ought to meet," thought the British Prime Minister, as he read *The Times* at his breakfast table. "Some place in Northern Italy or

the Riviera." He turned the page and found an enthusiastic article about Bellagio. "Well, why not?" he asked himself.

On the previous evening the Italian Foreign Minister had said something about the matter to his *Chef de Cabinet* as he sat at work in the Palazzo Chigi. "It ought to be somewhere in Italy," he stated. "In fact, it must be."

The *Chef de Cabinet* had his mother living at Cadenabbia. Bellagio, just across the lake, had a suitable number of hotels for a conference, so he suggested it.

"Why not?" said the Foreign Minister. "I will telegraph to London, Paris and Berlin about it at once. The sooner we offer the hospitality of Italy, the better."

So when the British Prime Minister called for his secretary he was shown a telegram from Rome, agreed warmly with its suggestion, and a day or two later Beppino, the proprietor of the Ristorante di Como at Bellagio, read about the coming conference in the *Corriere della Sera* and rubbed his hands in anticipation. Even if it brought not one visitor more to his restaurant, he thought, it would give Bellagio a great deal of free advertising, which would come in useful.

In the Palazzo del Municipio, the Mayor planned a great *festa* to welcome the delegates—a *festa* with plenty of noisy fireworks. The different hotels hurriedly put advertisements in the foreign newspapers. The master of the town band wrote to Milan for the music of "il God Save," "Tipperary," and "Die Wacht am Rhein," and he routed the "Marseillaise" and "Madelon" out of a dusty cupboard where they had been placed before the end of the war.

The proprietor of the Café Ravenna wrote to an agency in Milan for a Jazz-Band and to an agency in Rome for a number of young ladies who would lodge in his cellars, look decorative in his Café, and dance from four to six every afternoon and from nine to four every night in return for five *lire* commission on every bottle of champagne bought at their instigation. The world being what it is, he had the greatest difficulty in finding a disengaged Jazz-Band, but no difficulty at all in finding an adequate supply of young ladies, although most of them were not really quite so fresh and beautiful as their photographs had led him to expect.

The Italian Government decided that, *pour épater les délégués*, all the houses on the lake front must be repainted, and until the last moment workmen with caps made out of newspaper on their heads—for such is the *mode* among Italian builders and painters—were busy redecorating the principal cafés and restaurants. Beppino watched with anxiety while these quiet little rooms of his rivals were converted into glaring and over-lit bars and dance halls. His efforts to borrow more money to beautify the Ristorante di Como were unsuccessful, and he had to content himself with hanging out a large notice under his name.

"*As I am been ten years in London*," it ran, "*I can give you the dinner you wish*."

"That will help," he said to himself by way of encouragement. But he went across to grumble to his friend the chemist about the villainy of people who would not lend him more money and about the conceit of the other proprietors who were making such great preparations for the International Conference.

II

The first people to arrive were a few competent and rather sharp-tongued ladies with convoys of typewriters. They turned hotel sitting-rooms into offices and set up duplicating machines in the reception room of the Municipio. They gave orders, and expected them to be obeyed punctually, so that they became unpopular in Bellagio.

Then the typists and secretaries began to straggle in one by one. Elegant, but efficient young people who were accustomed to earn their four hundred pounds a year by going on from one conference to another. Life was not treating them too kindly now, for the number of international meetings of importance was decreasing as the years since the armistice swept by. But they were still well-dressed and very cheerful, since they would meet again delegates, experts and attachés whom they had met here and there during their eventful careers. Their numbers diminished as some of them married and others took up more regular work, but there were still enough of them to excite to admiration the incredibly elegant young men who hung around on the *piazza* when they ought to have been serving in shops or laying bricks.

But the first arrivals who interested Beppino were the journalists. A large, empty house had been taken over and converted into a club for their benefit. Beppino had been mightily impressed by the thick carpets, the desks, the armchairs and the neatly-uniformed messengers who were to run errands. Gentlemen for whom such luxurious quarters were provided must surely have plenty of money to spend.

The only thing was that they might not spend any of it at the Ristorante di Como.

For some days none of them did. The hotels and the more noticeable restaurants were doing well, for the little town was packed to overflowing. The British Prime Minister and his delegation had taken over most of the Villa Serbelloni, and the other hotels had not a room to spare, so that quite a lot of the hangers-on—the writers for odd monthlies, the representatives of the petroleum syndicates who had strings to pull, the unofficial delegations who produced by the thousand nice little booklets which everyone accepted with gratitude and which nobody read—so that many of these people went over to Menaggio and Cadenabbia to sleep each night. Some of them stopped outside his restaurant, but none came in.

Beppino took down his English notice to copy it again in larger and more vivid letters. While he was still at work on it, he saw three men studying the menu outside. At least one of them appeared to be English, and Beppino cursed his ill-fortune that they should pass his way just when his notice was not displayed. They would go on to the more attractive-looking eating-house down the road.

"This looks the sort of place we've been looking for," said Ivan Deane to his two companions. "Quiet, dear enough to be good, and, thank Heaven, absolutely Italian. It's these places that cater for foreigners that I detest."

"For once we agree," said Crichton.

"Anywhere where we can escape from the atmosphere of that confounded Conference will do for me," said de Lasserand. "I was busy half the night working out statistics to prove that my Government was right and your delegates were wrong."

"You probably did it so badly," suggested Deane, "that I am fulfilling a patriotic duty in standing you dinner. But as you may have got your beastly figures right it will only be dinner in this little *boîte* instead of at the Savoia or the Ravenna, where they come and talk bad French or broken English at you, and charge you treble for doing so."

Thus the first people connected with the Conference came to the Ristorante di Como and met its fat, greasy, beaming proprietor, Beppino Belloni.

III

In less than a week the only people who gathered outside the principal hotels to watch the British, French or German Ministers leave to attend the Conference sessions in the Palazzo del Municipio were a few casual visitors from other villages round the lake. The inhabitants of Bellagio worried very little more about Sir Ernest Channing and M. Duval than they would about any other foreigners, although Signor Ranieri, the Italian Premier, was still saluted respectfully as he walked along the quay. The army of Press photographers had dispersed, and the important delegates could sit at café tables without fearing lest some opposition newspaper should print photographs of them which would arouse the fury of the Prohibitionists at home. The Conference dragged on rather uneventfully—a plenary session each morning, and two or three committee meetings each afternoon—and everybody connected with it had but one ambition, namely, to forget about it for at least one hour a day.

The larger restaurants and cafés were crowded, for dancing and champagne helped to bring about that blessed mood of forgetfulness. But a few people, like Ivan Deane, preferred to seek forgetfulness in quieter ways, so that Beppino found that he had a small, but quite regular, *clientèle* of journalists with a sprinkling of diplomats. He withdrew his notice in English when Deane and several others threatened to desert his restaurant unless he did so. "We found this place," they declared, "and we want to keep it. And if you have one more table occupied by people connected with the Conference there'll be hell to pay. See?"

Beppino thought it over, and saw. Most of the journalists had generous allowances from their papers and did themselves well. Being special correspondents, they were seldom more than a week or two in one place, and therefore they appreciated anything that savoured of a regular home life. They had their reserved tables in the restaurant, and Beppino, being a shrewd little man, bought a score of cheap, aluminium serviette rings, which delighted his customers and saved his laundry bill. His life was somewhat irregular, for the journalists seldom lunched before two or dined before ten. They had to send telegrams after the morning sessions and to telephone all the gossip they could find to their Paris or Rome offices in the evenings. The cook asked for higher wages in consequence, but, although Beppino grumbled and protested, he had no cause to do so. The Ristorante di Como was making money, and he thanked the Virgin Mary that he had not been able to borrow enough to make the place smart and glaring, like the Café di Savoia. The journalists preferred gloom and dirt, which were cheap, and he would be able to paint the

restaurant as many colours as he liked after they had gone. Besides, they were jovial and amusing, and their gossip about the different delegates enabled Beppino to bewilder his neighbours. He had always posed as something of an expert on foreign affairs since his stay in England, but now he talked of Finland and conciliation treaties, protocols and the Ukraine, with a facility that gained for him a reputation unequalled in all Bellagio.

Ferucci came to ask him how he could best extend his leatherwork business abroad. Latini wanted to know the Italian for a few English words that occurred in a letter from his son in Chicago. Guazzoni asked whether, for a consideration, he would not help him to get a British permit to live in London. Bastianelli and Serrao came to him to settle a dispute as to the relative sizes of Berlin and Paris. He went as far as Milan to buy a smart new black suit to wear on Sundays, and his other suits seemed too tight for him, as though he were literally swelling with pride.

One evening a group of English and American journalists were discussing a dinner they proposed to give to Sir Ernest Channing, the Prime Minister of Great Britain.

" I wish we could do something more or less original," said Ferguson. " The P.M. must be pretty sick of the usual banquet."

" We ought to give him a real Italian meal. Spaghetti by the yard, octopus, *fritto misto* and all that sort of thing," put in Pollard. " It's a pity the Savoia has such bad cooking."

Beppino had his flash of inspiration. On the back of a bill he drafted a menu which should keep any Prime Minister in bed for a week. Then he asked

Ivan Deane if he could come with him for a minute. He led him to the old, walled courtyard behind the kitchens. A vine crept along wires stretched overhead, and two giant ilexes thrust black, mysterious branches over the end wall. The place was, for the moment, lumbered up with iron tables, wooden benches, and cases of empty bottles, but he explained to Ivan Deane how these could be replaced by a few little orange trees in nice, green tubs. Then he thrust the menu into Deane's hand and begged him, almost tearfully, to study it.

And why not? said all the habitués of the place. Beppino, being a shrewd man, brought out thirty-seven liqueur glasses and filled them with his best cherry brandy from Zara. Before the evening was over the Ristorante di Como had been chosen for the banquet to the Prime Minister. Anna, Beppino's wife, who had always been rather overawed by the sleek majesty of her husband—she was, herself, a quiet, insignificant little woman who was dreadfully ashamed because she had no children to carry on the family name—Anna was so overawed by the prospect that she begged him to cancel the arrangement. Something might go wrong, it might rain while the dinner was in progress, the cooking might not satisfy "Sir Channing," they were people of humble origin who had no right to be so ambitious.

"You should say 'Sir Ernest Channing,'" Beppino told her severely. "And he is a man of humble origin, too. I read in the *Corriere* that he first earned his living as a clerk in an office. And I as a waiter. The difference is not very great. This dinner will make my name known all over Italy, and then, who knows? I am still fairly young. One is not too old at forty-eight to enter politics." He puffed out his

chest with pride. "Have no fear, Anna. *I* shall organise it, and all will be well."

Anna reproached herself for her lack of confidence in Beppino, and went back, comforted, to her task of ironing table-cloths.

IV

The Anglo-American Press dinner to the British Prime Minister was one of the chief functions of the Bellagio Conference. Every night there had been a banquet at the Savoia or at one of the big hotels, for there were delegations from many impoverished European nations, who could only get delegates of the larger countries to listen to their accounts of the distress of their people when they were friendly or comatose after a gigantic and expensive feast. But it was at the Ristorante di Como that Sir Ernest Channing made his most impressive and important speech. Unlike most Englishmen, he was a splendid orator, with a voice as melodious as M. Briand's and a control of gesture which was all the more impressive in an expansive country like Italy. And when he attacked those enemies at home who accused him of making too many concessions to France, Italy, Germany, Russia and the Principality of Monaco, his voice echoed and re-echoed in the courtyard like the thunder of Jupiter.

The dinner had been excellent, and the Prime Minister had made no secret of his appreciation of the wine of the Castelli Romani and the Barolo which followed; Ivan Deane and several of his colleagues had praised the *fettucini*, the trout, the turkey and the rest of it; and most of the guests had taken two helpings of the *Monte Bianco* of chestnut *purée* and

whipped cream. Beppino, glowing with success, stood under the vine and listened with enchantment to Sir Ernest Channing. He could hardly realise that this speech, which would be flashed all over the world, was being made in the back yard of his own Ristorante di Como.

When the speeches were over there was noisy conversation. The Prime Minister was at his best, and his sallies were greeted with shouts of laughter. He declared that this dinner, in this quaint, little restaurant, had enabled him to forget the cares of office for the first time for months. "The Italians can certainly do things very well when they want to," he remarked. "I feel more in favour of their political claims now than ever before."

"Beppino Belloni, the Italian who runs this place, Sir, has lived for years in London," put in Easton, of the *New York Times*.

"Where? When?" asked the Prime Minister.

"He had a little restaurant in Charlotte Street, just off Tottenham Court Road," explained Ivan Deane. "Spent ten years there, I believe, but he left long before the war. It used to be called the 'Sirena' or something of the sort, so he tells me."

"Really! What do you say his name is? Belloni? Why, I dare say I've been there myself," said the Prime Minister. "I expect I have—I used to visit lots of little restaurants in those days. I almost seem to remember him." He stared hard at Beppino, and then smiled to himself, as at some secret thought.

A few minutes later he rose to go. "Very enjoyable. Very enjoyable indeed," he assured his hosts. "A memorable occasion."

As he moved towards the passage leading from the courtyard to the street, Beppino bowed obsequiously

to him. Bowed time and again. "*Buona sera, Eccellenza! Mille grazie, Eccellenza!*" he said.

Sir Ernest Channing stopped suddenly. He turned to the Italian and held out his hand. "I remember you, Signor Belloni," he said. "I remember you better than you do me. You used to keep a little restaurant in Charlotte Street, years and years ago. The 'Sirena,' wasn't it?"

Beppino was so overwhelmed that he could hardly reply. Still bowing, still muttering something about "*Eccellenza*," he shook hands reverently with the Prime Minister of Great Britain.

When all the guests had gone, he still stood in his courtyard by the disordered tables, with their coffee cups and tumbled serviettes. Impatiently he waved away the waiters who came to clear, and to drain the few liqueur glasses that were not empty. He wanted to be alone to think. He felt almost like some victorious general, and this back yard was the scene of his triumph. It was here that the great Sir Ernest Channing had shaken him by the hand, had declared that he remembered him and his little London restaurant.

The waiters in the kitchen, spying on this little, tubby man who stood between them and their liqueurs, did not guess the thoughts that passed through his mind. And they would have been amazed had they been able to see his face. For his pride had momentarily concealed itself behind a mask of rather ridiculous humility. Two large tears rolled down his fat, shiny cheeks and fell on to his beautiful black coat.

V

"This restaurant's going to the dogs," remarked Ivan Deane one day, when Luigi, the disreputable-looking waiter, brought him a cold *cervello al tegamine*. "The food's never properly cooked and never properly warmed up, and Beppino doesn't care a damn about anybody."

"It's ever since the dinner to the P.M.," said Easton. "I'm going to give up coming here altogether. That wretched dinner must have gone to his head."

Beppino passed their table with a lofty air. His new black suit was small for him across the chest. There was no obsequiousness in his greeting now. He said "*Buon' giorno, Signori*," with an air of immense superiority.

"He's certainly getting too big for his boots," said Easton.

"And for his suit," put in Ferguson.

"And for his restaurant," added someone else.

"Damned cheek, I call it."

"Hardly ever deigns to be here at all. Leaves everything to poor old Luigi."

"I vote we go to the Savoia. It's more cheery there."

"Cooking probably better, too."

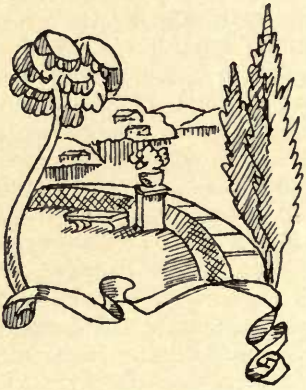
One by one Beppino's customers vanished, so that even the timid Anna ventured to speak about it to her husband. He waved her aside. There was no need to worry, he assured her. It was bad policy to spoil customers—they learnt to expect too much. Every restaurant had its ups and downs, and, after all, these journalists did not matter much. They were here

to-day and gone to-morrow. Then, with great dignity, he pulled an already familiar bundle of newspaper cuttings out of his pocket case. Even the *Corriere della Sera* and the *Stampa*, he pointed out, had mentioned him by name. A few diners more or less could not be compared with this fame.

The old customers—shopkeepers and clerks in Bellagio—no longer dared to visit this famous restaurant, and he did nothing to encourage them to come. Besides, the close friends of former times were now, after the Bellagio Conference, bitter enemies. The watchmaker, who had sold watches to the members of the British delegation, did not wish to drink wine with the postcard dealer who had associated with the Bolsheviks, and the son of Giani, the baker, would no longer speak to Bastianelli, the butcher, whose daughter had neglected him to flirt with an elegant young Albanian attaché. Bellagio was as changed by the Conference as Europe by the world war.

But, despite its English sign, the foreigners passed by the Ristorante di Como. Sometimes, well hidden by the window curtains, Beppino would watch these tourists on their way to the Savoia and other less famous places. His own dwindling savings and their stupendous ignorance made him anxious. Did they not realise who he was and the part played in history by the Ristorante di Como? For a few brief moments his self-confidence would disappear. But then he would pat his pocket case with its comforting newspaper cuttings, and would tell Luigi, half asleep in the corner, to bring his hat. In his nice black suit, a little shabby now, he would strut along the main street, greeting his fellow citizens of Bellagio with the kindly dignity which befitted so distinguished a person as himself.

The proprietor of the Savoia, who did not mind kicking a rival when he was down, would wink at the people who sat drinking vermouth or *Americani* outside his café, and, to the great amusement of the citizens of Bellagio, would amble a few yards behind the unsuspecting Beppino, imitating his mannerisms and forgetting to show the respect due to a man who had shaken hands with the Prime Minister.



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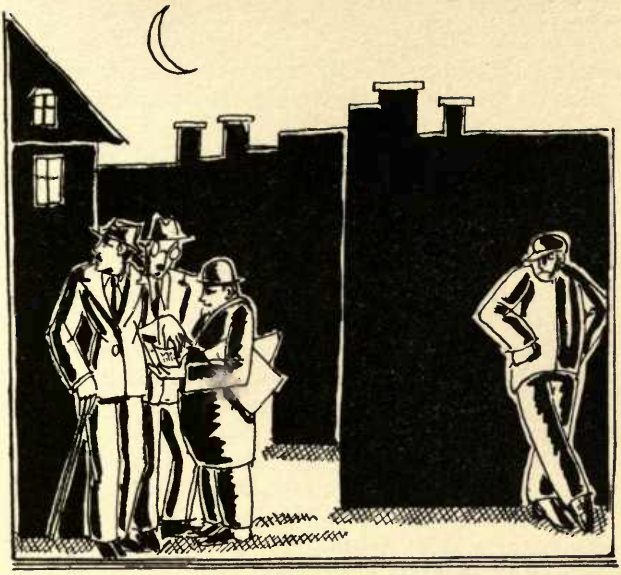


Valuta

I

THE fatal air raid on Metz took place five weeks before Elsa Friedmann's baby should have been born. A flight of French aeroplanes appeared, like gnats, from the clouds and dropped a dozen bombs on the city. Elsa, and the other women who were waiting in the meat queue, only moved for shelter when an explosion occurred within a hundred metres from them—they feared air raids but, still more, they feared to lose their place in the queue. From high above them came the rattle of machine guns—the Germans were attacking the invaders—and shells from the anti-aircraft batteries, bursting round the planes,

looked like balls of cotton wool. The Frenchmen wheeled towards the west and, as they did so, a German plane suddenly began to fall. At first it came down in a spiral, and looked as though it would land safely, then its wings crumpled up and flames burst from it. When it was still five or six hundred feet from the ground, a small black figure, with grotesquely waving arms and legs, jumped to his death.

Elsa cried out in pity. For the sake of her baby she tried not to think of the fall, but her husband was a pilot, and she could not turn her mind away from it. Otto always assured her that the casualties in the flying corps were far lower than those in the infantry, but death in the trenches was more difficult to picture, and, therefore, the idea of it would not so obsess the mind. She wished he could transfer to some other work, although he would no longer be stationed near Metz, and would probably only get home on leave for two or three days every year. The thought of the dead airman made her feel too sick to stand in the queue. Her father would be angry with her for giving up her place, but that could not be helped. She walked slowly towards their home in what is now called the Place St. Jacques.

Landwehr troops barred the way. A bomb had fallen there, they told her, and the quarter was *abgesperrt* to all except residents. She explained that she was a resident and she was allowed to pass. It seemed to her that somebody mentioned the name of her father's pharmacy. The bomb had probably fallen close to their home and the wounded had been taken to her father for first aid. As fast as her condition would allow, she walked on. Perhaps she could help.

The windows of the pharmacy were smashed and a group of people stood round the doorway. Some of

her neighbours saw her coming and whispered anxiously to each other. Frau Hirsch, from the grocer's shop, took her arm with unusual familiarity. "Frau Elsa, you must not go in," she said. "There has been an accident. You had better come home with me for a little and I will explain."

But Elsa pushed her roughly aside and went on her way. Several people spoke to her at once and the old doctor was muttering consoling phrases to her. They would not let her pass beyond the threshold of the shop, but she could see through to the dining-room. Where the farther wall should have been there was now a large hole, so that one looked straight out on to the garden. On the shop counter were two stretchers, two figures covered with cloaks. Dark patches of blood. She recognised her mother's dress, showing underneath the cloak.

"Father too?" she asked. And the doctor nodded his head. People continued to talk to her, to give her consolation and advice. How funny it was to be able to see the garden from here. Poor Mother and Father! She wondered how it had happened. Had they died immediately? Funny that hole in the wall looked!

She began to laugh hysterically and allowed them to lead her away.

That evening, while she lay with her eyes closed, she heard Frau Hirsch talking to the nurse. "Poor child," she was saying. "How shall we ever tell her about her husband as well?"

Her husband? Elsa opened her eyes and started up in bed. What was it about Otto?

Frau Hirsch tried to reassure her, to lie to her. But she had guessed now. That pitiful, grotesque black figure jumping from the burning machine. It wasn't

possible. Things could not be so terrible as that. Father, Mother, and now Otto! Otto, who would never see their baby! Elsa could not cry, could not feel so very sorry, could not believe it was all true. But she felt very weak and very lonely. Ill, too. Was her baby going to be born now? Why was not her mother with her? That poor figure on the stretcher? There must be some mistake about it all—Father, Mother, Otto. . . .

That night Elsa's baby, Ernst Friedmann, was born.

II

Elsa had never seen her parents-in-law, who lived in Breslau. She had met Otto early in the war when she was spending a few days at a little village up the valley of the Moselle, and his father and mother had done everything they could to prevent his marriage to the daughter of a small chemist in Metz. The wedding had taken place without their knowledge and, even after it, they had expressed no desire of any sort to meet Elsa. After Otto's death Frau Friedmann the elder wrote Elsa a letter, not of sympathy but of reproach. Had it not been for Elsa, the letter insinuated, poor Otto would not have been stationed near Metz and would not, therefore, have taken part in the fatal air raid. No reference was made to the fact that, had he not been in Metz, he would probably have been in some other place at least as dangerous. There followed a rather grudging offer to adopt the baby, and a very plain hint that the baby's mother would be unwelcome and would have little or no say in the baby's upbringing.

Elsa felt no resentment, for she knew that, socially,

Otto's marriage had been a *mésalliance*. He had been an only son, and his mother, in her distress over his death, had probably written more unkindly than she would otherwise have done. But the baby was Elsa's, and she let her mother-in-law understand this once and for all. She received in reply a letter in which she was accused of ingratitude and told that, having made her bed, she must lie on it. Elsa cried a little over this letter, and then tore it up.

It was not until some days later that she began to realise how bad was the state of her finances. Her father's shop had been insured in a foreign and enemy country, so that the policy, although it might have some value after the war, now had none at all. Nor had she even the policy itself, for it had been destroyed by the bomb, together with most of her parents' few articles of value—one or two old pieces of furniture and such-like things, which had meant far more to her father than the money they might have realised in a sale. The undamaged stock of the pharmacy gave her a little capital to live on for the moment, but it would hardly last more than a few months.

Her only living relative, an old aunt at Stammbach, wrote to offer her a home. But the maiden lady had no love of babies, was very poor and had been so long alone that so complete a change in her manner of living could hardly fail to make her unhappy. Besides, somehow Elsa would have to learn how to keep herself and her baby when once her capital was exhausted. The baby was under-nourished, nervous and fretful, and memories of her own holidays at Stammbach, with its forests, its river and its hills of warm, red sandstone, tempted her to accept her aunt's offer. But she had to think of the future, so she wrote to refuse and set to work to earn her living in Metz.

Her neighbours did what they could to help her, but they had worries enough of their own. The German retreat had begun and, although they wanted to see the French back, they feared for their city the fate of Rheims, Verdun or Ypres. The casualty lists grew longer and longer. The blockade made it more and more difficult to get any food at all. For the first time since the outbreak of the war men home from the front were declaring that defeat was inevitable, and there were rumours of revolution, doubly alarming in a country so ordered and orderly as Germany. In such circumstances, Elsa's own sorrows were forgotten in the vast flood of sorrow, suffering and uncertainty which swept over the whole country.

Besides, Elsa talked very little of her sorrows. It was not fair to Ernst, she decided, to think too much of the past. Somehow he had to be provided for, made healthy and happy, and this task left her no time to think of herself and her losses. She would tell herself that, whatever happened, the future would be brighter than the past, and this gave her courage.

Two months after she had found work in a chemical factory the war came to an abrupt end. Germany was defeated and Lorraine would go back to France. On November 19th, Marshal Pétain marched into Metz and Elsa stood on the Place d'Armes and shouted herself hoarse with joy. The arrival of the French would mean an end to the material difficulties of life. Somehow their presence would make it possible for her to get milk and nourishing food for Ernst. Old women who had wept tears of sorrow to see the French retreat from Metz in the Franco-Prussian war wept tears of joy to see the French return, bands playing and flags flying, after nearly fifty years. The younger people, who had never known any but the German

régime, were almost equally happy, for since their childhood they had been taught that France was the home of all liberty.

But a few weeks after the French arrival Elsa Friedmann was sent for and informed that she must leave Lorraine within forty-eight hours. Her husband had been in the German army and an uncle had been a very active opponent of France in local politics.

"But my uncle Joseph died a year ago," she protested. "Besides, he had quarrelled with the rest of the family. My father always upheld the idea of autonomy for Alsace and Lorraine."

"That has nothing to do with it. You are a German subject and your uncle was suspected of being a German agent during the war. You will have to go."

"But my child? My furniture—what am I to do? Where can I go?"

The French major tried to console her. Orders were orders, he explained, and her name was on the list of persons who had to be expelled. The best thing for her to do would be to go to Germany. She would be allowed to sell her belongings and he would disobey his orders to the extent of giving her four days instead of two. "You understand—don't you?—that I am not responsible," he added. "France has a difficult task before her and she can run no risks. Your uncle, you know, he makes it difficult. . . ."

He talked on about her husband's nationality and her uncle's alleged espionage while Elsa sat on an office chair and wondered what she was to do next. She felt no resentment, for she had all the long-suffering humility of the lower middle classes in Germany. The ways of officialdom were inscrutable, but they were always right. And in some ways she was almost grateful for this order of expulsion, since every street

in Metz had its associations for her and made it more difficult for her to forget the past and to dedicate herself to her son and his future. She sold her few belongings and set out for Berlin with a letter to Frau Hirsch's sister, who had lived there. It should be easier, she told herself, to find employment in a great city.

III

Berlin had become the most hideous city in the world. The plaster, peeling off the pretentious buildings in the Unter den Linden, emphasised their ugly vulgarity. The elegant Lustgarten, just outside the Royal Palace, had become the haunt of ragged workmen and soldiers who crowded there, with sunken, grey cheeks, to shout protests against some new law, or to denounce some new effort of the Monarchists to destroy their weak and half-hearted Republic. On the very day of Elsa's arrival in the capital she met mobs of madmen returning from the revolting murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. All the beastliness and hatreds of war seemed to be concentrated within the walls of Berlin.

Frau Hirsch's sister offered Elsa a room and pressed her to stay there for several weeks. But she had children of her own to look after and a husband who had developed Communist tendencies which had landed him in prison. At any moment he might be taken out and shot, like hundreds of his companions, and his wife was in no fit state to stand the anxiety of having another baby to look after while Elsa went out in search of work. Therefore, as soon as could be, Elsa took a room in the Wassergasse, off the Köpenicker Strasse, in Berlin's East End. It was a large room on

the fourth floor and between two houses she could see the stretch of the Spree and the harbour. There was something about it to remind her of the Rhine, with its busy shipping, and of the Moselle, with its beautiful wooded banks. But this was the room's only advantage. It opened on to a black, windowless and smelly passage, and on the ground floor was a combined bar, dancing hall and brothel, frequented by the bargees on their way across Germany from the Vistula to Hamburg. The drunken singing and the constant brawls would arouse the terrified Ernst night after night and Elsa herself was far more frightened of the bargees than of the firing that went on day after day in the street.

When order had been restored in Berlin and Germany had become outwardly fairly tranquil, the misery of the middle classes became greater and greater. The commonest word in the German language was "Valuta," or exchange, and there was no one who did not wonder how he or she could get pounds or dollars instead of marks, which might to-morrow be worth only a fraction of what they were worth to-day. The middle classes were being slowly exterminated, but exterminated in silence in dreary offices and dismal furnished rooms, the rent of which became, week by week, more nearly impossible to pay. People who had lived in comfortable security before the war slept out at nights on the seats of the Unter den Linden, side by side with harlots and war heroes.

Elsa found occasional work, but in a city of such changes fortunes were lost in a day and jobs lasted a week. She had had no training, and it was quite impossible to earn enough as a shop assistant to keep herself and a baby. She reproached herself for not having accepted her mother-in-law's offer to adopt Ernst. Perhaps this selfishness on her part had ruined

the baby's chances of ever getting enough to wear and enough to eat. She felt, as she compared him with the better fed children who were sent each morning with their nurses to the Tiergarten, almost as though she were conspiring to kill her own child, and when it became quite clear to her that, if she wanted to buy even the necessities of life for them both, she would have to be a shop-girl by day and a harlot by night, she wrote again to Breslau.

The answer was not comforting. Frau Friedmann's daughter had just given birth to a little boy, so that Ernst was no longer so welcome as he would have been a few months earlier and Elsa's letter showed plainly that she was now too humbled to suggest conditions. Therefore, Frau Friedmann stated quite openly what she had only suggested quite vaguely before. "As a sacrifice, we will adopt my son's child," she wrote, "but I am afraid it would not be fair to him if he did not become our child altogether. I think that it would be better in every way if, after he came to us, you ceased to see him entirely. We shall give him a good education and all the opportunities we should wish to give to our grandson, but, for reasons that need not be specified, we feel that the breach between you and him should be complete."

Elsa thought this proposal over for several days. She made inquiries and found a Home in Gross Lichterfelde where they would be willing to look after her boy and would allow her to see him once a week. The older children there were all dressed in rough, ill-cut uniforms, but the nurses were kind and efficient and there were several other babies of Ernst's age who looked relatively healthy and happy. Here, at any rate, was no effort to cut her off altogether from her child.

She could not tell how far her decision to refuse Frau Friedmann's offer was due to selfishness and how far due to her desire for her baby's welfare. She had begged for any sort of work in the Friedmann's house in Breslau which would allow her to be near her child, and she told herself that their curt refusal showed a hardness of heart which could only lead to Ernst's unhappiness. Besides, surely the comfort of watching her son grow, of protecting him, of working for him, was due to her after all she had been through !

She planned out the future coolly. The sum demanded by the Home for Ernst's keep was very small, but even this she would not be able to pay out of her war pension and such wages as she might earn as a shop-girl, even if she could be sure of finding regular employment. She had, therefore, to choose between giving up her child altogether and keeping him by selling her body. Somehow her sense of moral values had changed since the war. In the old days she would have been tempted to condemn Monna Vanna for saving a city by sacrificing her virtue, but now she had no sense of wrong-doing in deciding to keep her child near her, though she must become a prostitute to do so. She felt ashamed for herself, but not of herself, and her only fear was that she might not be able to save enough money. Before her boy reached an age at which he would begin to ask difficult questions she must have put aside enough to enable her to live a life less open to the criticisms of prying neighbours. For only should Ernst ever know would she be utterly ashamed of her sacrifice.

Elsa left Ernst at the Home and returned sadly to the Wassergasse to write to her mother-in-law. Nothing, she declared in her letter, would ever make her give up her only son. Then she put on the coat

and skirt she had kept hitherto to wear on Sundays or when she had to interview a prospective employer and walked nervously along the Friedrichstrasse, where women of forty wore their hair in pigtails down their backs in order to give them an air of extreme youth and maidenliness. Nearly every shop had become a bar, with cheap, flashy decorations which failed to hide the corruption, greed and vice that threatened to destroy Germany far more completely than any Allied invasion could have done. Outside on the pavements squatted beggars, mutilated soldiers, who were rewarded for their four years at the front by such *Schiebers* as deigned to throw them, with fat, stubbly fingers glittering with diamonds, a few of the almost worthless notes of every colour and design that were issued by different towns all over Germany. Hardly worrying to avoid the beggars, came the stream of painted dolls, male as well as female, who existed to excite the jaded sexual desires of the *Schiebers* by any form of beastliness which had the merit of novelty. In the less crowded streets that crossed the Friedrichstrasse were girls more simply dressed and less "got up"—war widows, for the most part, who, like Elsa herself, had a child to keep alive and saw no other means of doing it.

There were times when she was so disgusted by all this filth and degradation around her, or by the behaviour of some of the men who went with her, that she thought of suicide. But such moments were rare, for, without her, Ernst would be alone. Besides, she found, to her astonishment, that the feelings of self-abasement which obsessed her during the first few days soon disappeared. Most of the men she met were refined and treated her with consideration—the other sort preferred the more flashy and lascivious women of the Friedrichstrasse itself—and she was able to main-

tain in her relations with them an element of comradeship which helped to make lust difficult to distinguish from love. Her one afternoon a week with Ernst in the park of Gross Lichterfelde gave her courage to fight for him the rest of the week, and for the first time since the air raid on Metz she began to save money, although to do so she had to show a rapacity which men found was quite out of keeping with her quietness and refinement. Lying in bed in the mornings, she would begin to plan out Ernst's future, and, if he saw himself one day as an engine driver, one day as a chauffeur, and one day as a soldier, she saw him one morning as a great engineer, one morning as a scientist, and one morning as a general. She pictured her mother-in-law going out of her way to be charming and polite in order to have the honour to be introduced to the famous and handsome Ernst.

Her day-dreams took up so much time that she would have no chance of standing in a queue long enough to get meat or butter, and would have to spend more money than she could well afford on a bad lunch in a dismal restaurant or on *Bratwürstchen* bought from a stall at the street corner.

IV

Ivan Deane reached sleepily for the telephone receiver and lay back on his pillow. He had been out dancing in the cabarets of the Kurfürstendamm, and had only returned to the Hotel Adlon at four in the morning. It was now barely nine, and already someone had succeeded in cutting short for him that pleasant period during which he was freed from Berlin and its misery.

"*Allo*," he said crossly. "*Wer ist da?*"

"*Ach, guten Tag, Herr Deane,*" came the reply. "This is Lisa."

Lisa? Lisa who? Did he know a Lisa? He doubted it, and asked for further explanations.

"You remember. You *must* remember your Lisa whom you met in the Luna Park."

"No, I'm afraid I don't. I'm sorry, but there must be some mistake."

"Not a mistake, but perhaps a misunderstanding, *ein Missverständnis,*" insisted the girl. Might she see him some time to explain? This afternoon for tea?

"Nothing doing," declared Ivan Deane, and slammed the receiver back on its hook. There was some excuse for his rudeness, since unknown women too frequently used this method of getting in touch with possessors of pounds or dollars, and the concierge of the hotel earned a handsome income by selling the names and room numbers of the visitors in the Adlon to the harpies who frequented its large entrance hall. If only he could get away from the beastly place! But it was too good a news centre to be deserted. Almost the only people in the hotel now were newspaper correspondents, and the top floor had been shut up altogether. All the other foreigners had left. The hairdresser in the basement had alarmed many of them by gloomy forecasts of another revolution and others had tired of running from one bank to another to buy marks, which were rationed to so many millions a day. In all the banks people sat counting enormous bundles of notes, which they carried home in suit-cases. Ivan Deane employed a German every day to change money for him, since he would have no time to work if he had to spend half the day waiting in queues outside banks to get a few million marks before the supply

gave out. The foreign tourists found it too difficult to buy anything with their marks when they had got them. It was true that shops were compelled by law to stay open for so many hours a day, but they had little to sell, and it sometimes happened that the shopman would chat amicably until closing time came and made it possible for him to turn the would-be purchaser out into the street. Besides, prices varied so from day to day that the bad mathematician could never work out when he should buy and how much he should pay.

Ivan Deane tried to sleep again in order to forget the muddles of the collapse of the mark. But he had begun to think of the contrast and absurdities of present day Germany and he could not escape from the subject. He called for his bundle of morning papers and spent an hour marking in impressive red pencil the passages which would be useful for his telegram to London later on in the day. He dressed just in time for a cocktail before lunch, but he arrived in the American bar during a small war. A number of American correspondents, ably supported by two Englishmen, were amusing themselves by hurling books, ash-trays and any other solid objects that happened to be available at the glass cupboard where the liqueurs and aperitives were stored. The barman had taken refuge beneath his own bar, but a perfectly innocent German who strolled in was hit over the head by a beer bottle and was blamed for all the trouble by the management, which preferred American dollars to marks and patriotism. In disgust, Ivan Deane left the Adlon, and wandered along to the Bristol, where he ran into Ronald Merrick, a newcomer to this city of desolation.

"I can't get any money," he grumbled. "I got too late to the banks and what am I to do?"

Deane handed over a roll of bank notes such as no American millionaire in a cinema film ever produced from his wallet. "This won't pay for your dinner, but it may pay a tram fare. Let's dine together this evening, and then we'll go to get some money in the Grenadierstrasse."

"What's that?"

"It's about the only place where you can change money in the streets. The law against it is very strict, but it's amusing to try, and you get a better rate here than in the banks."

After dinner the two strolled along the Grenadierstrasse, their hands in their pockets. The street was crowded. Beneath the street lamps people huddled together to read books or papers, since they could not afford light in their homes. In the darkness between the lamps hovered villainous-looking men, watching intently every passer-by. Three sidled up to Ivan Deane and Ronald Merrick. Deane nodded. "*Wechseln?*" he asked.

"Don't stop," answered the man. "Go in the fifth doorway on the left and meet me at the end of the courtyard."

One of the men closed the doors into the street, and by the light of an electric torch two of the others counted out the money. They could not change two pounds, but a pound was handed over, while Ronald Merrick swung his heavy stick ostentatiously to and fro. "That's enough of that sort of thing," he said when they were out in the street again. "I'd rather stand all day in a bank queue."

"I'll take you to another place, if you like. A real den of thieves."

"Fire away then," said Merrick. "I thought we should never get out of that courtyard, and I don't

suppose we *shall* out of your thieves' den. But fire away. Don't mind me. Tell mother I died a hero."

"Come along and don't be an idiot," urged Ivan Deane. He led his bewildered companion through a network of streets in the neighbourhood of the Alexanderplatz and stopped outside a restaurant with whitewashed windows. An unpleasant-looking spot, thought Ronald Merrick, as he stared at the door, which had brown paper pasted over the glass panes. But Ivan Deane assured him it was a quiet sort of place and pulled him inside.

A fat man, who, to judge by the creases in his skin, had once been much fatter, demanded an entrance fee of half a million marks apiece. But there was no performance or entertainment to justify this demand. There were very few tables and few signs of food, but a number of men and girls sat drinking at a long counter which ran down the room. Elsewhere people of every sort were talking, arguing, pleading. It took Ronald Merrick a minute or two to realise that they were all buying or selling. Some had watches, handbags made of American leather or red velvet cut from the seats of railway carriages, cigarette cases, rings, books, socks, shirts and pictures. A grubby man wandered to and fro selling cigarettes by the piece. Most of the men were quite obviously dealers in stolen goods, and Merrick felt glad that his suit had been made in Rome instead of in London, so that his pockets were shut up securely with buttoned flaps. But a few people were equally obviously cultured and refined, and they bargained stubbornly but clumsily in the hope of getting the best price—if possible in food instead of paper money—for the few jewels that the collapse of the mark had still left them. The girls who

sat at the bar were there because it was their habit to collect wherever money was changing hands.

Ronald Merrick looked around him more with disgust than with interest. "I think the Bristol Bar or some dancing place would be more in my line," he declared. "No, no, I don't *want* to buy anything," he assured the Germans who crowded round him. "I've already eight hundred and seventy-two watches and ninety-three diamond rings." He turned again almost appealingly to Ivan Deane. "Come, let's get out of here."

"That girl will be sorry if you do," said Deane.

"Girl? What girl?"

"That one over by the fat Jewess. She's got her eye on you, my lad."

"By Jove, but she's rather nice. The quietly-dressed one, you mean?" He stared over in her direction.

In the ordinary way, Elsa Friedmann would have stared back provocatively. She now looked at Ronald Merrick, but without any of the customary boldness of the cocotte.

"Do you want to get out of here?" asked Deane.

"Do I *what?* No, of course, I don't," answered Merrick as though the very suggestion were preposterous.

Elsa Friedmann had not had an easy time during these five years, but she still managed to look fresh and unaffected. Like many girls from Lorraine, she walked better and wore her clothes better than the Germans of the *Reich*. And amidst so much coarseness her neat air of refinement was quite impressive. She had saved, mark by mark, for years to assure her son's future welfare, and her savings had become worthless almost overnight. Her total capital would

have bought furniture for a house three months ago—now it would not pay a tram fare. She had had to bring Ernst in from Gross Lichterfelde, and now he lodged with her in a miserable room near the Admirals Palast. To a second room, which she could only reach by passing through the bedroom where her landlady and her husband slept, she had to bring the men she met in the streets and cafés. There was, naturally enough, a look of sadness in her eyes which Ronald Merrick found infinitely attractive. No, of course he did not want to get out of here!

"You're in luck," said some girl to her when he beckoned her over to their table. "They're English. Do your best for me with the other one, and I'll give you half what he gives me."

But, despite her luck, Elsa went almost reluctantly. She felt embarrassed and ashamed. And Ronald Merrick treated her with a courtesy that made her wish all the more that she had met him elsewhere and in different circumstances. She refused to drink champagne, but was happy enough to have a sandwich and a cup of *Ersatz Kaffee*, made of crushed acorns and Heaven knows what beside. As soon as her embarrassment wore off she carried on a lively conversation with Merrick, who spoke broken German, and entirely neglected Ivan Deane, who invited her friend to have a glass of beer and quite forgot to pay the least attention to her chatter. She talked, of course, like everyone around her, of "Valuta." Less than four months ago he had received the fabulous sum of 115,000 marks for one pound, and half an hour ago the men in the Grenadierstrasse had been delighted to give him twelve million marks for one English pound note. The printing presses were working day and night and still could not meet the demand. Motor lorries laden with

bank notes went from bank to bank to enable the cashiers to meet demands. A few days ago a stall at one theatre Deane had visited had cost one pound of butter, and for less expensive seats the management asked two eggs. There seemed no way out of this chaos and all the people in this dirty café were haunted by the same fear. They had frightened eyes and they grabbed like misers at any object which appeared to have a lasting value. Only, unlike misers, their one desire was to get rid of their money. Those who could not hope to afford to buy some foreign currency bought odd objects which were quite useless to them and which, a few days later, they would be compelled to sell again to pay for bread. Few people in the café could afford tobacco, and there was no blessed veil of smoke to dim the harsh outlines of their thin, anxious faces. They glared hungrily, enviously, at Ivan Deane and his friend, both well-fed and well-dressed. Deane realised that he was, *malgré lui*, a *Schieber*, a profiteer, who made millions a day out of the "Valuta."

He got up hurriedly. "I can't stand this any longer," he said to Ronald Merrick. "Let's get out of it."

Merrick looked distressed. "But just now you didn't want to. And as soon as I meet this dream child you want to. You're jealous, that's what it is."

"No, it isn't. I'm fed up. I'm off home."

"Well, I agree I've been in better holes than this one and I'm willing to move on to some place that looks more cheery. But I'm not willing to move without the dream child."

When it was explained to Elsa that they might go and dance somewhere, she agreed in delight. Ivan Deane gave his young lady an English shilling, which left her almost speechless with gratitude, and followed

the other two out into the street. He went with them as far as the "Magnet Bar," near the Friedrichstrasse, but when he got to the door he explained that he would prefer to go home. Neither of them pressed him to alter his mind, so he went off to the Adlon, half glad that he would get to bed at a reasonable hour, but half angry that they had parted from him so readily. He went to bed and dreamed that he was condemned, for profiteering, to carry his day's salary in German fifty mark notes from the Friedrichstrasse to the Pariser Platz. Even a motor lorry would have broken down under the burden, and he had to struggle so with this immense pile of paper money that he awoke, perspiring, but delighted not to find himself surrounded by a crowd jeering at his efforts.

A very mild nightmare, he thought to himself, for one who had had the temerity to drink *Ersatz Kaffee*.

V

Ronald Merrick was an elegant young man with very little money and very little sense of responsibility. Before the war he had drifted, as the youngest son in a large family, into chartered accountancy and had led a narrow but fairly cheerful life bounded by his rooms in Leinster Square on the West and by his office in Old Jewry on the East. Occasionally he went as far as Ostende for a week-end, but his "sprees" consisted generally of a dinner at the Trocadero and a little dancing with a lot of drink at some gloomy night club in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square.

The war had swirled him away from his London round and had dumped him down in the trenches for a year or so and then in a little French town where he

was Assistant Provost Marshal. He had married, during a long spell of convalescence after scarlet fever, and was the father of a little girl. But, after the war he had found it difficult to settle down to office life again. He bought a little house in Harrow, but spent a great deal of his time in Cologne, whither his firm sent him on business. He seldom took the trouble to analyse his emotions and, indeed, rather despised "introspective blighters" who did. But, had he done so with calm and honesty, he would have realised that London bored him because life was too regular; that he hated clubs because they were dull and pompous; that, although he was very fond of his wife and his daughter, he did not think a great deal about them when they were not there; that his tastes had become selfishly expensive during the war; and that he was much more ready to sacrifice his seat in the underground to a pretty girl than to a plain one. He was widely popular because he was cheerful and good-humoured, but nobody had ever suggested that he was very brainy. The suggestion, indeed, would almost have offended him.

He had been a week in Berlin before he met Elsa Friedmann and he had been hurrying through his work as quickly as possible. Berlin's misery so thrust itself upon him that it had made him think about peace treaties, justice, the problem of Europe's economic recovery and all sorts of kindred uncomfortable subjects which did not, as a rule, take up his attention. He had to spend a few days in Leipzig on his way back to England, but Leipzig was likely to be less depressing than Berlin, or than Berlin had been before he met Elsa. Now he thanked Heaven that he had the books of a very important firm to go through. His office would forgive him if the task took him longer than he

had originally expected. And if they did not forgive him, well, it could not be helped. For the moment Elsa meant more to him than anyone or anything else in the world and he was not going to leave her until . . . until . . . ? He decided not to worry about the future, but to make the most of the present.

For her part, Elsa confessed at once to herself that her feelings towards the young Englishman could not be summed up merely by the word "*sympatisch.*" In various and unexpected ways she realised that she loved him. Her modesty before him was pathetically incongruous, seeing that she had given her body to so many men without hesitation and without thought except as to the money they would hand over to her for Ernst. She could not bring herself, after their first night together, to accept any money or presents from him. And she found that she could not persuade herself to accept the advances of any other man. She had ceased, in the space of a few hours, to be a prostitute and had become a lover instead.

Her feelings for Ronald Merrick had other consequences of a serious financial nature. She spent much of her time in the "Magnet Bar," a third-rate dancing place where the manager gave her a percentage on all the sales for which she was responsible. Here she brought Ronald evening after evening, and other people gave up asking her over to their tables. She still received her percentage on what he ordered, but, despite her need of money, she advised him to drink Deidesheimer instead of champagne and to smoke Batschari cigarettes instead of Havana cigars. Her war pension, which should have amounted to about one pound a week, was now valueless, since the mark itself had no value, and she could not see how she was to buy food or clothes for her child.

Of this conflict between her love for him and her love for Ernst Ronald Merrick guessed very little. He was not at all observant, and it never occurred to him that his presence meant that night after night Elsa had to go to bed hungry. At first he had felt apologetic for taking up so much of her time and was almost morbidly anxious not to prevent her carrying on her profession. But she so obviously enjoyed his company and, as he grew fonder of her, the idea of her selling her body to other men became so revolting that he under-estimated her financial needs. She refused to take money from him and, therefore, he thought, she did not really need money.

It was thus more on his own account than on hers that he urged her to find two rooms in Schöneberg to which they could move with Ernst. He could not make his stay in Berlin last for more than another week or so, but Elsa had no desire to remain in her miserable little lodgings, and she might be able to come on to Leipzig with him when he went there. Thus, for something like a month she would have security, she would be freed from the menace of starvation.

For a little while Elsa held out. "It's no good, Ronnie. *Es geht ja gar nicht.* You will soon be going back to your home. You had better leave Ernst and me in our groove. We'll struggle through somehow."

But how could one struggle through when already the pound was quoted at over a billion marks? She was so obviously frightened of the future that he could hardly have left her even if he had wanted to. And the very idea of leaving her reduced him to misery. For the first time in his life Ronald Merrick had fallen head over heels in love, and with a quiet, sad, little German whom he had picked up in the slums of Berlin. So he

had his way. She moved with him to rooms near the Bülowstrasse and, later, to Leipzig.

She argued against the journey to Leipzig. It would cost him more than he could afford and she would be stranded in a strange town when he went back to England.

"Why always talk about England?" he asked in exasperation. "What's the good of worrying about the future? Let's make the most of the present."

"I have to think of the future because of Ernst," she pointed out, "and I think of England because you don't belong to me. You've got other people to consider."

"Anyhow, unless you agree to come to Leipzig, I shan't leave Berlin," he declared sulkily.

"But your office orders you to go."

"My office can go to hell."

"You will be dismissed."

"It can't be helped. I won't leave you. Elsa, you *must* come with me. How can I leave you here when nobody can tell what will happen to-morrow? We don't know what will happen to us to-morrow, but we are going to stick together as long as we can, unless you're tired of me."

"Ronnie, you shan't speak like that. It's only that I've got no right over you. But I'll come to Leipzig. Even if it were only because of Ernst I should want to come. Even if it were only because I'm frightened of the next few months in Germany. But it's more than that and you know it. Oh, Ronnie, I'm too fond of you to tell you how grateful I am to you. I'd so nearly forgotten how to be happy. One is so lonely here in Berlin, so *fürchtbar einsam*."

They packed, made plans about the future which excluded all consideration of Ronald's wife and

daughter, and went off to Leipzig. Elsa, as a matter of fact, thought far more about his wife and daughter than he suspected, but she refused to feel conscience-stricken about them. She had herself and, still more, Ernst to think of. The change would do him good, for the summer in Berlin had made him weak and pale. Ronnie wanted her and she wanted Ronnie. She could not be expected to reject happiness when it came knocking at her door, to return to her dreary walking of the streets when she had the possibility of leading a more protected life, if only for a few weeks. It would be unfair, she argued, to Ronnie, to Ernst and to herself.

Ronald was amazed by the contrast between Elsa in Berlin and Elsa in Leipzig. She had left behind her in Berlin all her worries and in Leipzig she was bright, anxious to see everything, laughing and careless. She even abandoned her reluctance to accept presents of any sort from him, for she looked upon him as her mate with whom everything was to be shared. She guarded his purse and his cheque book from the crowds of would-be profiteers as carefully as though they had been her own and she consulted him about the clothes Ernst ought to wear and the education she ought to try to give him as though he were the boy's father. When he returned from the office where he was working she was always ready for him with amusing gossip about her day and with all those flattering little attentions that German women have for their ungrateful menfolk. They were so taken up with each other that even the chaos all around them hardly stirred them.

But Ernst caught cold and developed pneumonia. Ronald found the best clinic, the best doctors, the best nurses. He did not, in this crisis, feel as dis-

tressed about Ernst as he would have done about his own Stella, but Elsa's anxiety affected him as nothing had ever done before. She would not leave the child's bedroom except when the doctors ordered her to, and even then Ronald could not get her to leave the clinic. He took a room for her there—by paying fabulous bribes—and stayed with her hour after hour, trying to console her.

"You see, he's all I have," she would say. "Not all, of course, since I have you, but it is from him I've had to get my courage. It hasn't always been easy, especially at the beginning. I was brought up with all the middle-class respect for the conventions. I was sheltered, intolerant, strict, because I felt quite safe, of course. When everything collapsed it was only the thought of Ernst that kept me going. Everything I have done, I have done ungrudgingly because of him. I've watched him grow. I've prayed—prayed to myself in the arms of men who had picked me up in the Friedrichstrasse—that the day of my weekly visit to him at Lichterfelde would soon come round again. He's all I've got. I can't lose him."

She would cling to Ronald and ask him to judge whether she had not done wrong in refusing to hand her son over to her mother-in-law. "It was only selfishness that made me keep him. If I had let him go he wouldn't be so ill now. I shall have killed my own child."

Ronald was a bit of a fatalist, because it was the easiest thing to be, and he would manage to comfort her with his arguments. There could be nothing wrong in a mother wanting to have her own child with her. Nobody could be blamed for the fact that Ernst lay delirious in a ward along the corridor. What had to be had to be. Besides, the chances were that

Ernst would pull through. He was so young, and every child had to be seriously ill from time to time.

Ernst was young, all right, but he was weakened by years of under-nourishment. On the fourth morning he died in his sleep. As Ronald went almost alone to the cemetery he wondered at his own sorrow. During the anxious hours of the last few days he had almost forgotten that Elsa was not his wife and Ernst was not his son. As a rule he avoided worries with an obstinacy which made him appear heartless, but now his selfishness had disappeared. He felt so much sympathy for Elsa that he forgot to think of himself. His one desire had become to lessen her suffering and to give her fresh courage.

But she would not be consoled. Now that Ernst had gone, she explained, she had nothing left to work for or live for and all her sacrifices in the past had been in vain.

"We have each other," suggested Ronald.

"And for how long? You have your other ties. You'll have to go back in a few days."

Ronald tried to think things over dispassionately, but the dim future had ceased to count for him. He told himself he was a cad to show so much indifference to his wife and child, and then he told himself that he would be just as much of a cad to leave this girl, who had come to depend upon him, just at the moment of her deepest misery. In England there was at any rate a certain measure of material security and here there was none. Elsa had no courage left to start her fight again alone. Come what might, he was not going to desert her now.

He explained all this as best he could to Elsa and her reaction convinced him that he was doing right. She pulled herself together and was quite enthusiastic

when he suggested applying to London for a week's leave on the ground of ill-health, and taking her to Dresden. It would do her good to get to some place where she would not have memories of Berlin and Leipzig thrusting themselves upon her all the time. She fell in with all his suggestions with a willingness that flattered him and that increased his own attachment to her. By the time their honeymoon, as they chose to call it, in Dresden had come to an end, he was talking openly of trying to get a divorce, and she, having found someone on whom she could shower all the love she had formerly given to Ernst, spoke of the future with confidence. "We might even leave Germany, and go together to England," she suggested. "What fun it would be to live in a country where there are no food queues. Yes, we might do that."

"We might," agreed Ronald, a little doubtfully. He felt that somehow Elsa was better in her own *milieu*. He could not picture her living with him in a London suburb or visiting his various uncles in their vicarages and rectories. The visits, though, were never likely to be made, for his relations would not want to meet a German girl with whom, as they would put it, he had been living in adultery. And, after all, he could hardly blame them for that. For himself, he worried less about morals than about conventions—or he would have done had he found any difference between them—but he would certainly have condemned anybody else who acted as he was acting now. Ronald went back to his work in a bad temper, but why or with whom he did not know.

Elsa changed again as soon as she returned to Leipzig. Ronald saw nothing of this change, but it was all the more profound because she hid it from him. The more she knew him the more she loved him, and

her love, as it grew, became more unselfish. In this city the memory of her own child was so fresh that she could not help thinking of his own child. She looked upon him almost as a child himself, who, having very little sense of responsibility, must be looked after and cared for. If he did not think of his future, she must do so.

"If you get divorced, will Stella come to you?" she asked one day.

"No, of course not," answered Ronald almost roughly, and they were both thoughtful during the rest of the meal.

VI

At the office Ronald found an ominous letter from his firm asking why he had not yet returned. He went round to the British Consulate and found out that there were various formalities which would make it difficult for him to take Elsa back with him. Besides, what would he do with her while he was getting divorced? He was so accustomed to persuading other people to do things for him that the necessity of making all these arrangements himself terrified him. Besides, he had not yet written a single word of warning to his wife, but had put off this task from day to day. He must write to break the news to her to-night.

Back in their hotel, Elsa had been thinking things over. She had tried for too long to shut out all consideration of the future. Ronnie for the time was very devoted to her, but this devotion would wane. He had to earn his own living and would have to go back to England to do so. Once there—unless he took her with him straightway—he would tire of her, and even if she went with him his other interests would

drag him away from her. If she kept him now she might have security and happiness for a few weeks, but he would lose his job, his wife and, above all, his daughter.

There was only one thing to be done and in the end she found the courage to do it. She sat down at the table and scribbled a letter to him.

"*Mein Allerliebster*," she wrote, "You will not, perhaps, be very surprised to see from this that I have gone, but you will never know how much it has cost me to go. I have thought it all over again and again, and there is no other solution. I love you too much to upset your whole life. You have been very good to me and it is just for this reason that I beg you to go back to your wife and Stella. Had my Ernst lived I could not have given you up, for you meant not only happiness for me, but security and protection for Ernst. But now nothing matters, nothing except your welfare.

"You could not have been happy for long with me. Our countries are still enemies, and our lives have been too different. Don't be angry with me for leaving like this. It is only for you that I am doing it.

"I am afraid I shall have to take one pound from your case to pay my fare away from Leipzig. And I am stealing your photograph of Stella. This you will forgive, for you know how much I love you. I suppose, by ordinary standards, I have long ago forfeited the right to pray for anyone, but my prayer that you may be happy and may settle down quietly again with your family is so sincere that it ought to help. It is no good worrying more about me. I have no Ernst now to care for, so I do not mind so much what life does to me. Perhaps, later on, if I come through, I will write to you at your office in London, And, in any case, we are so

many millions in so many countries who have been beaten by the war that I don't matter very much.

" I wish I could be sure you will understand and not be angry with me for leaving like this. They will not talk in the hotel, as I shall tell them I have to go away suddenly to see my mother. I am glad I have your photograph of your daughter, and I thank you again for your love and help.

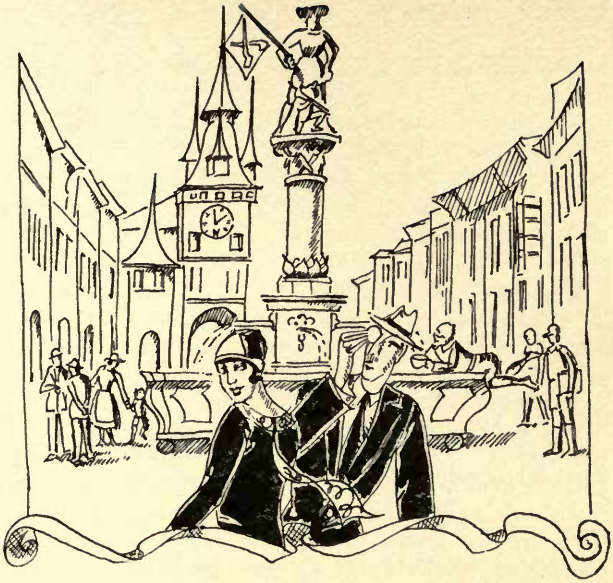
" Go back again to London and forget all about

Your

ELSA."

She packed her wickerwork trunk, wrapping up carefully the photograph of Ronnie's child. Then, too miserable to feel guilty of histrionics, she propped the letter up against the dressing-table mirror, as she had seen actresses in the cinema do. She pulled her trunk out of the room herself lest the porter should see the note, and by the time Ronald Merrick had come home from the office she was staring unseeingly out of the window of the dingy third-class carriage which was jolting her back towards Berlin and the hopelessness of the Friedrichstrasse.

Prince Friedrich's Throne



Prince Friedrich's Throne

THERE was considerable excitement that day in Berne. Journalists of different nationalities lounged in the hall of the Hôtel Astoria waiting for news and watching the staircase and the lift so that no bearer of interesting gossip should escape them. A few of the more experienced or less conscientious correspondents had found their way to the bar and were throwing dice for drinks. They would get their "story" all in good time, and no decision was likely to be reached for hours to come. "After all," Ivan Deane pointed out, "you don't accept or refuse a crown as easily as you might a tie or a pair of socks."

"I should think Prince Friedrich would," replied

some cynic. "Probably a damned sight more easily."

Tommy, the barman, smiled discreetly to himself, for there was a good deal of truth in the remark. Having taught Prince Friedrich to shake cocktails, he had a shrewd idea that the heir to the Lusitanian throne was prouder of his ability to mix a "monkey gland" or a "horse's neck" than of his prospective kingdom. "There'll be plenty of time to be king," he would say to Tommy, "but little to be barman." Even he shared King Peter's belief that their period of exile would not last more than a few months.

The manager paced up and down the hall with lowered brow and stooping shoulders, as though weighed down by the responsibility of having so many influential customers—"guests" he preferred to call them—discussing such important matters under his roof. It had been an expensive business housing the Lusitanian Royal Family almost for nothing during so many weeks, but this political crisis was invaluable as an advertisement. To-morrow all the newspapers in the world would be talking of the Hôtel Astoria. The prospects of retiring to a little hotel of his own on Capri seemed to brighten considerably. In the lounge, a group of Lusitanian students from Geneva University waited to pay their homage to the Royal Family, and several Lusitanians, who had not always been very loyal, tried to disguise this fact by signing their names in a book on the concierge's desk. Unobtrusively, near the revolving door into the street, sat the detective who had been told off by the Swiss authorities to watch over King Peter of Lusitania since his arrival in Switzerland six months ago. He was rather a dejected-looking guardian angel, who only smiled when someone asked him the time or offered

him a cigarette, for then he would think of the gold watch or gold cigarette case which the King was certain to give him when the term of exile was over.

Upstairs, in the large corner room looking across the valley of the Aar to the distant peaks of the Berner Oberland, sat King Peter, Queen Caroline, Prince Friedrich, Baron Bramitch and, facing them, Count Marinetti, the Lusitanian Minister in Berne. He was explaining the gist of the long telegram he had handed to the King and he carried out his task nervously. He was a vain little man, but even the neat crease in his trousers and the beautiful polish on his boots could not give him much self-confidence to-day.

"Your Majesty would not wish me," he began, "to refer at length to the lamentable behaviour of the people which led to this sad period of absence from the fatherland. The Lusitanians are too credulous, far too credulous, and they allowed themselves to be led astray by propagandists and agitators financed by the Western Powers. I remained here as Minister because I hoped that by so doing I could use my influence to show the people the error of their action, for I have always been a loyal subject of Your Majesty."

The King looked rather unconvinced, so Count Marinetti hurried to change the subject.

"Lusitania needs a leader at once. Someone who can pull the country out of the rut into which it has fallen. The Regent himself has been the first to recognise this, and it is in great part owing to his attitude that I am authorised to make my offer—my appeal to-day."

King Peter interrupted him. "Yes, that's all very well, Marinetti, but this telegram refers to Prince Friedrich. What about me? I have never abdicated. I am the lawful King of Lusitania."

"Quite, quite, Your Majesty," said Count Marinetti soothingly. And again: "Quite, quite. But there are serious difficulties. The Western Powers, for example, are still prejudiced, unjustly prejudiced, against Your Majesty, although they would make no objections should His Royal Highness, Prince Friedrich, ascend the throne."

Prince Friedrich was leaning back in his chair, and, although he watched the Minister with apparent attention through his monocle, his thoughts were elsewhere. In Elsa de la Valette's bedroom, to be precise.

"But, confound these Western Powers," expostulated his father. "Lusitania is an independent State. My subjects should reach their decisions uninfluenced by politicians outside our frontiers."

"Quite, quite, Your Majesty," said Count Marinetti. And again: "Quite, quite. But, of course, the Great Powers can make their wishes felt. The Foreign Office! The Quai d'Orsay!"—his shoulders expressed his opinion of these institutions more eloquently than words could do. "There are questions of our northern frontier, of our share of reparations, of credits to be settled. Above all, credits."

"Yes, of course, credits," agreed the King, rather subdued, for, having no money himself, since the revolutionary Government had sent him none, he realised its immense importance.

Baron Bramitch, who could read King Peter's mind like a book, felt the time had come for him to speak. "As former Foreign Minister and, I hope I may add, as His Majesty's confidential adviser, I understand fully the sort of pressure exercised by the Great Powers. But, if His Majesty were to abdicate, I take it this very unusual sacrifice on his part would be adequately compensated."

"Quite, quite," put in Count Marinetti hurriedly. "A handsome pension would, of course, be voted. Besides, the Monarchy would remain, as it were, in the family. The elections have left us no choice. The people want Prince Friedrich as their ruler. If Your Majesty were to abdicate in favour of your son there would be ways in which the people's gratitude could be expressed."

This was all rather upsetting, thought Prince Friedrich to himself. Had he not enough trouble with Elsa de la Valette without all these worries about the crown? It might be rather fun to be king from the point of view of amours and amusements, but there would be such a number of boring functions to attend, of boring documents to sign. Life was infernally complicated! It was a pity Elsa took it and him quite so seriously. If only she were as tired of him as he was of her! In any other place he would have rid himself of her long ago, but here in Berne there was nobody else. The streets were so empty that after nine o'clock at night one crept along in the shadow of the houses like a criminal. The only event of the week was the Monday diplomatic dance at the Bellevue, and to this King Peter or members of his family could not go for political reasons. Friedrich's cousin, the Duke of Danzig, had boasted that once, in the Marktgasse, he had been accosted by a lady of easy virtue, but Danzig, with all his qualities, was a notorious liar. Such things did not happen in Berne. Still, these months of exile had passed pleasantly enough, thanks to occasional visits to the *Bal Tabarin* in Geneva or the *Bonbonnière* in Zurich. If only it were not for Elsa!

Why did that wretched little Marinetti not go away? He kept breaking into the realm of his thoughts. What did he want? Oh, yes, to offer him

the crown, of course. Rather fun, but a devil of a nuisance. After all, in Berne he had no work and no ties. No ties except Elsa.

Marinetti was appealing to him direct now. Lusitania, he was explaining, was on the verge of another revolution. The Republicans gained ground every day. A popular monarch would be able to hold the country together. The Government had not forgotten the great services rendered by King Peter, but it was to be feared that some sections of the population had done so. But there was no such ill-feeling against Prince Friedrich. Lusitania must not become a Republic, and only Prince Friedrich, as King Friedrich the First, could save her.

"In a word," broke in King Peter, "I am called upon to abdicate in favour of my son?"

Count Marinetti bowed his head. There was a short silence, and then Baron Bramitch, the King's oldest friend, intervened. Their Majesties would doubtless need time to think this over. The issue was too serious to be settled off-hand. Perhaps if Prince Friedrich were to refuse the crown now it would shortly be offered to his father again. On the other hand, the Republican danger might be quite as grave as Count Marinetti believed. In any case, would it not be wiser to leave the Royal Family a few hours in which to talk things over?

Queen Caroline smiled her thanks to her friend for his suggestion. She had long since accustomed herself to accept without question decisions which affected her whole life, and about which nobody ever thought of consulting her. But, if the persuasive Marinetti were to go away, her husband and her son might agree together to renounce the throne for good and all. Any sort of exile, she felt, would be preferable to the

dangers and nervous strain of the Lusitanian throne, and she alone had looked upon the months of exile as a blissful holiday, despite the vulgar curiosity of tourists who nudged each other and followed her whenever she went out in the streets. If only Marinetti would go!

Marinetti was by no means unwilling to go. But the Cabinet was waiting for his telegram. Otherwise there might be a Republic, the President of which might decide to change his Minister in Berne. "I might come back a little later," he suggested to Bramitch.

"When must you send Prince Friedrich's reply?" demanded the King.

"It should go with the least possible delay, Sire. But Your Majesty would perhaps wish for a couple of hours?"

"Four," said Bramitch.

"Four," echoed King Peter.

"Four," agreed Prince Friedrich, who was wondering how he could make Elsa understand he was tired of her.

Count Marinetti agreed with some reluctance. When he came out of the lift he was pounced upon by the waiting journalists. They scribbled notes on the backs of envelopes, and then, while he returned to the Legation in the Kirchenfeldstrasse to await the decision, those who had to supply evening papers sent off "flash" messages, while the others retired to the billiard room to play an exciting game with coppers piled on a cork in the centre of the table. Their lack of vigilance gave Prince Friedrich his chance to escape unnoticed from the hotel by the tradesmen's door, which he had used many times before when he wanted to elude the detective. Before he left the hotel he had taken a momentous decision, and had refused, for the

first time, to pay attention to the advice of Baron Bramitch. He had decided to reject the offered crown. "Too much like hard work," as he had put it to himself. "Quite impossible to take the throne which still belongs to my father," as he had put it to Baron Bramitch.

Walking through the old town towards the river, he had ample time to think over his action. Bramitch probably wanted him to become king because his father's chances of returning were slight and because exile had aged King Peter considerably. But he did not see why, to satisfy Bramitch's ambition to direct, or misdirect, King Friedrich as he had done King Peter, he should alter his own way of living. There was not a pretty girl in Berne with whom he had not danced, and there were not so very many whom he had not kissed, for he was a young man whose power of initiative was virtually confined to love-making, and, besides, not all the girls in Berne are pretty. Life had, of course, become much more difficult since Elsa had taken to watching jealously over his every flirtation, but, even as things were, he managed to extract a considerable amount of amusement from existence. Besides, as King Friedrich, he would be watched over by a legitimate wife and by all the gossips of the Court as well.

Bramitch had warned him that he might have to earn his own living, since the Lusitanian Parliament would not vote any money for the exiled family. This was a little alarming, since he saw no prospects of succeeding in such a task except, perhaps, as a barman or a professional dancer. But if things became very difficult his mother would doubtless sell some of the family jewels, and when they had been sold there would be time enough to make an attempt to win the

throne. In the reply to the Lusitanian offer, as it was now being drafted by Bramitch, there was no suggestion of a definite abdication of all his rights. He merely refused to wear a crown which he looked upon as still belonging to King Peter. It might be rather amusing, when he had tired of flirting and dancing, to lead a monarchist movement in Lusitania, and not very difficult either. First, one had to marry an American heiress with the ambition to become a queen and, secondly, one had to wear more striking and beautiful uniforms than those worn by the President of the Republic. The Lusitanians appreciated a good figure, and he had only to persuade a few papers to print, side by side, photographs of himself and of that old scamp Bronstedt, who would probably become President, in order to win the support of the people. That was one of the advantages—perhaps the only advantage—of a democracy. The people were so easy to lead.

Well pleased with his decision not to sacrifice the certainties of exile for the uncertainties of Kingship, Prince Friedrich knocked at the door of Elsa's flat. She welcomed him in great excitement, for the news of Count Marinetti's offer on behalf of the Lusitanian Government had been printed in *Der Bund*, and her romantic spirit was stirred beyond words by the idea that her lover might within a few hours become a reigning monarch. Of plebeian parents who had lived in close contact with the aristocracy—her real name was Elsie Jones, her father had been an English jockey in the stables of Chantilly and her mother had been maid to an old duchess with a decaying house on the Boulevard St. Germain—Elsa de la Valette had absolute contempt for plutocrats and unlimited respect for aristocrats. She was torn by conflicting emotions.

On the one hand, she did not want to lose the only important lover she had ever had, but, on the other, she wanted Prince Friedrich to become king. In a vague way she was a professional dancer, but the idea of returning to the promiscuous existence of a cabaret dancer was extremely repugnant to her. Prince Friedrich had spoiled her. Still, as king he would certainly be able to help her.

"I've had a visit," she announced. "A Mr.—Mr.——" she produced the visiting card from her handbag—"Mr. Max Campbell, of the *New York Daily Leader*. He wanted to know if I thought you would go back to Lusitania."

"Damn these journalists! Got to hear about you through the hotel concierge, I suppose. What did you say?"

"I was fearfully discreet," she announced triumphantly. "I said that a person who had had the honour of dancing a few times with Prince Friedrich could not be expected to know his thoughts, but that I felt sure you would do what was in the interests of your people. Of course, you are going back, aren't you?"

"I don't think so. No, I've refused."

She looked so surprised that he had to explain, and he could not give her the true explanation, which was that he wanted to be free to enjoy wine, women and baccarat. She was too jealous, and he wanted no more scenes to-day, for Count Marinetti, with his persuasive offers, and King Peter, with his selfish advice, had given him more than enough to worry about. "One of the reasons," he suggested, "was that we should have to separate. In fact, I think that anyhow. . . ."

But she gave him no chance to finish his sentence. Her romantic heart was touched. She came over and

sat on the arm of his chair—he had purposely avoided the divan—and put her face against his. "How like you, Freddy dear," she said. "But you mustn't sacrifice yourself to me. There's your future to think of. There's your duty, your divine right."

"Good Lord!" thought Prince Friedrich to himself.

"It ought not to be said that Elsa de la Valette allowed you to sacrifice yourself, your people, for her." She felt like the heroine of a musical comedy. "Besides, couldn't we go on as we are? I mean, I could come to Lusitania too."

He explained, a trifle too hurriedly, that he would have to avoid all possibilities of scandal. One could not be too careful with a strong Republican Party always on the look-out. In fact, he felt that anyhow, even in exile, he would have to be very, very cautious.

"Then are you going to give up all those dancing places in Lausanne and Geneva? Freddy, I'm so glad. And they're such awful old hags there, too."

Prince Friedrich shrugged his shoulders in despair. He muttered something about there being safety in numbers and he thought something about there being none so blind as those who won't see. "I was thinking more about this fellow Max Campbell," he remarked. "You see, there will be a good deal of gossip about us if these journalists know all about it."

"But he said he had known you for some time. And if that's so he may have heard some gossip from your aide-de-camp or someone in your suite."

"It's possible, just possible. But one has to be very careful. Perhaps if we did not see each other for some time. . . ."

She interrupted with another question about his refusal of the crown. It had suddenly occurred to her that there must be some reason he had not explained.

"I don't feel I should be much good as king," he began.

She put her perfumed hand over his mouth. "I know you so much better than you imagine," she insisted. "Why, I can read your thoughts like an open book. And you want to make a sacrifice which I ought not to accept. Because you love me you want to give up your crown. My dear, you ought not to give up your whole life to me like that."

"Good Lord!" thought Prince Friedrich again to himself, and he tried to utter a protest.

"No, no, I won't listen. It's like your generous nature to try to deny it. But you can't deceive me, my dear, splendid Prince. I know what you are thinking—that love counts more than coronets. Yes, and I feel that, too. But you must be *sure*. You must think it over carefully first."

"But it's not only, not so much, because of you," he managed to explain. "I don't feel I'm quite fit to be a king. I'm no good at decrees and all that sort of thing. I'm such a fool about politics."

Again her hand came down over his mouth. "Friedrich dear, you *shan't* run yourself down like that. Those excuses are useless. You want to give this up because of me, but you're so gentle, so tactful, that you don't like to say so. And you hunt around for all sorts of silly excuses about decrees. What babies all you men are!"

Prince Friedrich polished his monocle violently with his silk handkerchief to hide his agitation. Why, he wondered, would she not understand? He could not put up with much more of this. For the first time he noticed how fat she was getting. He had almost to struggle for breath. Even a crown would be better than this sort of thing. How was he to make her

realise that he still wanted his liberty? Life, he thought profoundly, was very complicated.

Her mother's blood was in her veins. "I want you to put your country first, my dearest Prince. Duty before everything." There was something rather fine about this attitude of self-abnegation, she thought. What a pity nobody was here to see and applaud. At the same time, it was a little dangerous. He was so devoted to her, so much her slave, that he was not likely to give her up for a troubled kingdom. He was so helpless without her and had so little sense of responsibility. He depended upon her. But it would never do to encourage him too much to return to Lusitania. She had herself to think of as well as his alleged duty towards his people.

"You mustn't think I don't appreciate the way in which you try to hide your real reasons," she assured him. "If you *do* give up the throne, I'll make it up to you all right. We'll be very happy together, won't we? I wonder what you'll do? I might get you a job as a dancer. We could dance together. Even if you want to drop your title we'll get on all right. But I think you ought to keep it. It would help us so. It *will* be fun, won't it?" She wandered off into a monologue on her projects, their projects, for the future, while he watched her gloomily. Surely, even in a place like Berne, he could have found a younger and more attractive companion than Elsa de la Valette? One moment she cuddled up to him in a pseudo-childish manner which might be justified by her peroxidised, fluffy curls, but was not justified by her figure; the next she adopted a maternal air of superiority which aggravated him beyond words. Damn it all, he was no kid. He was twenty-three and, despite her undoubtedly wide experience, he probably

knew quite as much about life as she did. When he could not sleep he used to count the women who had helped to give him a knowledge of it, just as other people—or so they averred—counted sheep passing through a gap. And if that did not show he was a man of the world he would like to know what did!

He would just prove to her that he was not the baby she appeared to believe. He rose to go. "I shall have to get back to the hotel," he explained. "They'll be waiting for my answer."

"But I thought you'd refused."

"Not definitely, you know. It's not quite settled."

She experienced a moment of panic lest she might have talked too much to him about his duty. But the feeling passed. She was so sure of him. "I hoped you'd stay to dinner, but I quite see you can't to-night. We'll have such fun together. We—we might almost get married."

"We might. It's conceivable," agreed Prince Friedrich enigmatically.

She flung her arms round his neck and hung by them, her feet clear of the floor. She would break his neck one day with these baby tricks. "Good-bye, Princikins," she said. "You'll be all right with me. I expect you to-morrow afternoon."

He got away without giving too much evidence of his exasperation. "Princikins," of all idiotic names! And even a Council of Ministers could not curtail his liberty as she did. After all, his father had been what is called a "gay dog" in his youth, and people were certainly no stricter nowadays than they had been in the nineteenth century. It was a pity he had given his decision after so little reflection. One was not asked to be king every day of the week.

Prince Friedrich strolled around in the streets of Berne until evening. Sometimes he wondered about the throne of Lusitania and more often he wondered how he could escape from Elsa de la Valette. He'd just show her!

It was after eight o'clock when he hurried into the Astoria. The journalists in the hall surged towards him, and asked for news. He edged towards the lift. "I can't speak frankly for the moment," he explained, "but there ought to be an important announcement in a few minutes." He bolted into the lift and was whirled up to the second floor, out of reach of awkward questions.

In the *salon* he found his father and Baron Bramitch still talking. King Peter's desk was littered with telegrams from prominent citizens who had suddenly felt impelled to assure him of their unfailing loyalty. A few enterprising business firms had telegraphed to offer him motor cars, portable typewriters, or safety razors by way of advertisement. All these messages had been thrown anyhow on to the desk, but one large sheet of paper King Peter held anxiously in his hand. Still worrying about his refusal, thought Prince Friedrich. Well, he'd surprise his father and old Bramitch. And Elsa, too, with her beastly superiority.

"Has my reply gone to Marinetti?" he asked hurriedly.

King Peter shook his head.

"Good. Because I've changed my mind. I'm going to accept the crown after all. I feel it's my duty to my people. They shall have their King Friedrich."

King Peter gave no sign of joy or regret. Probably a little upset by the disappearance of his own chances of returning to the throne. It was bad luck on the

old man, but Elsa gave one no choice. Even Bramitch did not break the silence. He stared at Prince Friedrich for a moment, then crossed the room and took the paper from King Peter's hand with a little bow of apology. "This came five minutes ago," he told the Prince. "It's a copy of a cipher telegram to Count Marinetti."

The Crown Prince of Lusitania looked at the message typed, in the large letters peculiar to diplomatic typewriters, on the letter paper of the Lusitanian Legation in Berne. "Reference 16087," it ran, "Cancel offer crown Friedrich. Stop. Bloodless Revolution has led overthrow decadent royalist party. Stop. Republic declared three o'clock this afternoon amidst scenes greatest enthusiasm. Stop. Constituent Assembly unanimously voted deposition Gravengo dynasty declared exking Peter all direct descendants exiles in perpetuity. Stop. Expected Great Britain France Italy will recognise new regime without delay. Stop. Benda Foreign Minister Republican Government of Lusitania."

"If you'd been able to make up your mind at once instead of fooling about . . .," began ex-King Peter.

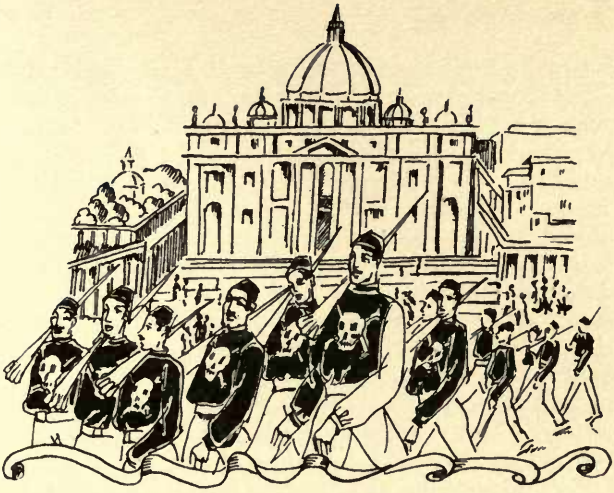
Bramitch shrugged his shoulders as though to exculpate Prince Friedrich. "The revolution must have occurred even before Marinetti came here," he pointed out. "This telegram was probably on its way even then. That scoundrel Benda, too! It's too late, Your Majesty, too late." The pathos in his voice was deepened by the realisation that he, too, was an exile.

Prince Friedrich stood for nearly five minutes staring at the copy of the telegram. He was thinking less of the throne of Lusitania than of his own quandary. "Cocktails," he said to himself at length. "She

can't be my partner then. Better be a barman than a dancer. Yes, cocktails every time."

Some five hundred miles to the East, outside the former Royal Palace of Maritza, were sentries with red cockades stuck in their caps. In the square in front of the main entrance was a great bonfire of the portraits of King Peter and his ancestors of the Gravengo dynasty, and around the bonfire danced the towns-people of Maritza, shouting patriotic songs, while the new President of the Republic watched them, a trifle uneasily, from the window of the former king's study.

Twin Brothers



Twin Brothers

I

"YOUR brother's taste in friends, Gino," remarked the Marchese di San Varese, "is not much better than his taste in ties."

Gino Moretti, who was sucking iced coffee through a straw, looked up angrily. He was getting tired of his brother's behaviour. "Who's he with now?" he asked.

An excessively elegant and dissipated young Florentine flicked his glove contemptuously in the direction of three men who had just come out of the Chamber of Deputies. "Just look at him, your philosopher!" he said with the sneer of one who had lost money to Gino at *chemin de fer* the night before.

The most conspicuous of the three men who were approaching had a large, round, good-humoured face,

a large, round stomach and a large, black beard, and the political cartoonists had made him so famous that even the passers-by in the street recognised him as Modigliani, the Socialist deputy. The second man, slim and neatly dressed, was Giacomo Matteotti, another Socialist leader. The third was quite obviously Gino Moretti's brother, for he was astonishingly like him, and yet at the same time astonishingly different. The two reminded one of a " before and after " advertisement of some patent fattening medicine. Pietro was thin, dreamy and untidy, while Gino was so elegant, so beefy (without being fat) and so sleek that a witty French Secretary of Embassy, watching him dancing at the Grand Hotel, had once referred to him as " *Bœuf à la mode.*" And, much to Gino's disgust, the name had stuck. All the swagger and handsome young men who frequented the Caffè Aragno, where he now sat, the Hôtel de Russie and the bar of the Hôtel Excelsior knew him by that nickname and would not allow him to forget it. He had no title and no money, but plenty of courage and good humour, and, as a coming man in the Fascista movement, he was admitted to their magic circle, but only by putting up with a good deal of chaff, this rather unpleasing nickname and, now, a number of bitter comments about his twin brother.

" I don't envy Pietro his brains," he said to his friends at the café table, " but I wish to the devil he'd use them differently."

As he watched his brother talking to Modigliani and Matteotti at the corner of the Corso he thought to himself that brains were really more trouble than they were worth. They would certainly end by getting Pietro into trouble. A reputation as a philosopher second, his admirers declared, only to

that of Benedetto Croce was all very well in its way, and when the three volumes of the "Storia della Democrazia" were published his brother's name would probably be known throughout Europe. But, argued Gino to himself, that sort of thing led you nowhere. Democracy was as dead as mutton, anyway, and he could not see why his brother should be so fervent a supporter of the idea of personal liberty when he led, from choice, so quiet and decorous a life and was therefore so unlikely to come into conflict with the restrictions imposed by any ordinary Government. Besides, these stinging little articles from his brother's pen which appeared from time to time in the *Paese* or the *Mondo* were beyond a joke. If he didn't like Fascismo, with its conception of the subserviency of the individual to the welfare of the Fascist State, why the devil could he not keep his opinion to himself? No, brains were a danger nowadays, and especially in politics.

Besides, if Pietro had the brains, Gino had the good looks, a plentiful supply of British regimental ties—which were then the fashion among the aristocrats of Rome—and an adequate supply of London-cut suits. How he could afford them nobody knew, for it could not honestly be said that he worked for a living. He would sometimes undertake to buy or sell a motor car, a villa or an Old Master for some friend, and he played a great deal of bridge with more cleverness than one would have attributed to him. He bore the title of "*Avvocato*"—but who, in Italy, does not?—and he had an office in the Via Nazionale, which was useful mainly as a place to which ladies who should have known better could come to see him.

And in the last few months he had become a prominent member of the Fascista Party. This policy of

action delighted him and gave him an outlet for all those patriotic energies which had hitherto found escape in grousings against the Government, Socialists, the Treaties of Peace, President Wilson, the League of Nations, the Chamber of Deputies, and the liberal philosophies of his twin brother. It was not very satisfying to damn the Versailles Conference for causing Italy's difficulties, but he was finding any amount of satisfaction in the increasing strength of Fascismo and its downright contempt for the democratic idea. Perhaps it was natural that a considerable part of his satisfaction should be due to the fact that, since he now had an ethic of his own, he could at last feel himself to be almost the intellectual equal of his twin brother.

"Pietro's a little mad," he said, as much to himself as to his friends round the café table, "but he's an awfully good fellow really."

"It's a madness that will cost him dear if he goes on criticising Fascismo," retorted the young Florentine. And none of them replied to Pietro's salute as he passed with Modigliani and Matteotti. Even Gino, in a moment of rare resentment or moral cowardice, pretended not to see him and turned his attention to the straw in his iced coffee. The silence was so embarrassing that he felt called upon to continue his defence. "The worst of it is that he honestly believes the nonsense he writes about the sacred rights of the individual and all that sort of tosh. He's not out for himself like most of these confounded dabblers in politics. It's almost a religion with him, this democracy business. He's perfectly sincere."

"Then he's all the more dangerous," asserted the Marchese di San Varese dogmatically.

And at precisely the same moment Pietro was

defending Gino from the criticisms of Modigliani and Matteotti. "Yes, I know Mussolini looks upon him as one of the most promising young men in the Party, and that in itself makes him a danger," he agreed. "But, unlike lots of the others, he's absolutely genuine about it. I argue with him that the Black Shirts will destroy all that is best in Italy, but it's of no avail. We're too unlike, he and I. It was the same thing during the war. I was an incompetent young subaltern making a mess of things on the Carso while he was doing wonders as a pilot. He's a man of action. He's one of the few of his crowd who really earned his decorations. He didn't win them by sitting in the Caffè Aragno, like so many of them."

"The more in earnest he is, the more ruthless he will be and the more carefully we shall have to watch him," declared Matteotti.

II

The twins had, that very evening, the first frank discussion for weeks. They happened both to be supping at home, and their father, Professor Moretti, was called away urgently to his research laboratory at the Policlinico while the meal was in progress. For once Gino did not hurry off to Fascisti headquarters in the Via degli Avignonesi and for once Pietro felt disinclined to go on working at his book, so that they took their coffee out on to the terrace with them. Their flat was in a *villino* on the Viale della Regina, with a sweeping view across the Campagna to the Alban Hills. And they both so loved this view, with the dim arches of the old Roman aqueducts striding across the plain and with the lights of Albano and Frascati and Rocca di Papa glittering on the distant hillside, that they

forgot for a few moments the barrier that political differences of opinion had been building between them.

"That view was always with me throughout the war," said Pietro at length.

"It was worth fighting for, even if we did lose the peace afterwards."

"We've had a bad time, of course, we Italians, but we're recovering slowly."

"Not fast enough for my liking. It's high time to take things out of the hands of these muddling fools of politicians."

"I've no more respect for them than you have," conceded Pietro, "for their moderation is only evidence of weakness instead of strength. But it won't help Italy to have a dictatorship, such as you Fascisti dream of."

"Won't it, *per Bacco!* But we shall have it all the same. You've no idea how the youth of the country feels about it. The Socialists daren't show their noses any more."

"They lost their chance long ago, when they occupied the factories and then handed them back to Giolitti again. You Fascisti are beating a dead horse. There is no Communist danger, and you know it."

"Anyhow, we're putting a new spirit into the people."

"A spirit of revolt and destruction."

"Sacred revolt against all that is bad in the present *régime*. Italy must become a great power in the world."

"Yes, I agree. But how to measure greatness? Material force is a synonym of bigness, not of greatness. How many States have not suffered defeat because, like Germany, they have swelled themselves out like

the frog of the fable? Besides, the world wants peace, needs peace."

"And it shall have peace when Italy has justice, raw materials and room to expand. But it is treachery to accept a peace which puts Italy in chains."

Pietro gazed in silence across the Campagna for some minutes, while Gino walked impatiently up and down the terrace. They could not talk for five minutes nowadays without becoming bitter. If only Pietro were not so stubborn, and yet so sentimental about his democracy. . . . If only Gino were not so stubborn, and yet so sentimental about Italy's flag, Italy's future and Fascismo. . . .

Pietro caught his brother by his arm as he passed. "Let's try to get to the bottom of this," he said. "Let's be frank with each other. How sincere are you about Fascismo? I used to think you were a Black Shirt only because it gave you notoriety, and made the aristocrats pat you on the back. I begin to believe, almost to fear, that I was unjust to you."

Gino tried to analyse his own feelings. "At first I did feel like that. I admire Mussolini, as you know, enormously, but most of all I liked to be a leader in a new movement. Only I've changed. I believe, now, heart and soul, that only Fascismo can save Italy."

"God! And I believe heart and soul that Fascismo can only ruin Italy."

"Everything is so chaotic that she's ruined now unless Mussolini can pull things together. Why, look at the strikes and . . ."

"Yes, I know," interrupted Pietro, "but I don't mean that sort of thing. The Fascisti might make trains run punctually and lessen the number of strikes, but only at the cost of our great liberal traditions."

"Damn traditions! Damn your Mazzini and

Garibaldi! Democracy and parliamentarism are dead, or, if they are not, we shall destroy them."

"And yet they flourish in England, Mussolini's rival for control of the Mediterranean."

"In England, perhaps, but they're all too cold-blooded to understand anything else there. I am for dictatorship, with Mussolini as dictator."

For an hour or more they argued, forgetting that argument serves only to convince each how right he is and how wrong is his opponent. Pietro, who was the elder and calmer of the two, tried to keep bitterness out of his voice, but they felt too deeply about it, and at length Gino broke off in the middle of a sentence. "It's no use," he concluded. "We're on opposite sides; nothing will alter that." He went indoors, and a few moments later the door banged, and Pietro could see him hurrying towards the Porta Pia on his way to join his friends in their favourite café.

Leaning on the white stone wall, Pietro gazed at the twinkling lights of the Alban Hills. He smiled sadly to himself. "It's funny," he thought, "that two people should take opposite sides when they're probably both fighting for the same end."

He, in turn, went indoors, and sought comfort in the cheerful tolerance of the Abbé Jérome Coignard.

III

Throughout the summer Fascismo grew in strength and its power went to the heads of its younger followers. Every Sunday saw them, armed with clubs, rifles and revolvers, careering in motor lorries through the little towns and villages of Umbria and Tuscany. Every Monday saw lists of the casualties in the newspapers. Pietro hated this civil strife, and not only

because he was on the losing side; Gino rejoiced in it as a sign of the increasing strength of his Party. There were regrettable excesses, of course, but the other side had been worse in the days when Communism controlled the country. To which Pietro had nothing to say except that, even if this were so, two wrongs did not make a right, that he wanted neither side to be the stronger, and that he hated this distortion of patriotism which led to something very like civil war.

"Anyhow, for your sake and mine," urged Gino, "I should advise you to stop writing political articles in the papers."

For a while Pietro did stop, but not because of raids on newspaper offices or of threats of personal violence—he had not the reckless courage of his brother, but he was stubborn enough in the defence of his creed—but because Professor Moretti died, and politics were thrust into the background. The twins knew that they could not live together, now that their father was no longer there to keep the peace between them with his tolerant laughter, and they both jumped at the suggestion that they should sell their flat and move closer to the centre of the city. Gino found a small apartment in the Via Cavour, while Pietro was offered two rooms by a Socialist Club which was compelled to economise. The rooms were in an old *palazzo* in the Via Giulia, and here, surrounded by the stones of ancient and mediæval Rome, he set to work to finish his "History of Democracy," with little time to spare for political articles for the *Paese* or any other paper that opposed Fascismo. As Gino put it, he wrote just sufficiently often to remind the Fascisti that he was an enemy who would have to be reckoned with when the day of reckoning came.

IV

Gino Moretti, in smart black silk shirt with the skull and crossbones embroidered in white on his chest, marched at the head of his Fascisti along the Via Nomentana to Rome. As he paced along, with the tassel from his black fez swinging boldly from side to side, he thought of earlier invaders who had followed this Roman road through the Campagna on their way to conquer the Eternal City. In an hour or two he would be at the Porta Pia, where the Italians of 1870 had made their breach in the walls to destroy the Temporal Power of the Popes. Just as the Vatican had underestimated the determination of Italians to achieve national unity, so these Governments of Giolitti, Nitti, Bonomi and Facta had failed to realise that the Italians who had fought on the Asiago Plateau and along the Piave had fought to regenerate Italy, to abolish the abuses of the professional politicians and to put fresh blood into the State. Four days before, at a great meeting in the Opera House in Naples, Mussolini had given the word and, in panic, the Facta Government had resigned. According to peasants Gino met on the road, there were troops just ahead to defend the gates of Rome, but nobody believed that they would fire on the Fascisti, so many of whom had been their comrades throughout the war.

Above other roads to right and left floated clouds of dust, stirred up by the advancing Black Shirts, and the air was loud with the rumbling of motor lorries with their Fascisti burdens. By noon all thought of resistance had been abandoned, the barbed wire entanglements had been cleared away, the gates had been thrown open and the first motor lorries were careering down the Via Venti Settembre towards the

empty Chamber of Deputies. Rome had surrendered without firing a shot to stop the invaders.

It happened that just when Gino Moretti was reporting at the new headquarters of the Fascisti in the Hôtel Bristol his brother Pietro was writing the last words of his History of Democracy. During the last week he had not been out of doors, had not opened a newspaper and had seen nobody but his old servant, Beppina. At last the work he had planned in the trenches was finished, and in a few days, after a final revision, he would be able to send the three piles of neat manuscript to the typist on their way to the publisher and the public.

As he turned the pages he paused every now and then to frown over some paragraph which did not please him and which might fail to convey his meaning.

"Critics," he read in one place, "may argue that the word 'democracy' is given a number of different meanings, and those who style themselves 'strong men of action' may pour scorn on an idea which, only too often, is used to cover up the selfish aspirations of a class or a demagogue. But let them beware lest they forget that the idea of democracy is the expression of the ideal that each citizen should accept a share of the responsibility for the political development of his country. Philosophically and practically, responsibility cannot exist where there is no freedom, and a state of freedom can only be maintained by a development of the greatest human qualities.

"We have at present the forms of Democracy, but very little of its spirit, and, in so far as this development of civilisation can be judged, it must be judged, not by its partial failures, as in the United States, where there are no artistic or aristocratic traditions to temper the materialism which will be so powerful an incentive

towards the democratic form so long as any citizens have to fear starvation, or in our own Latin countries where these traditions or the revolt against them are not yet combined with any understanding of the communal idea except in chauvinistic enterprises; it must be judged, on the contrary, by its partial successes in such countries as Sweden, Switzerland and Holland and, in a much wider sphere, in the League of Nations, the first great experiment in international democracy. The perfect democrat is doubtless as difficult to find as the perfect Christian, but it is hoped that the following pages will serve to show how justified is our belief in government of the people, by the people, for the people."

There was not, he reflected, so great a difference between his brother's idea of Fascismo and his own idea of Democracy. They both saw the greatest degree of liberty for the greatest number of individuals in the idea of service to the State. Their ideas of patriotism, of course, were as divergent as they could be, but possibly he had misjudged Fascismo, and had too frequently forgotten that intolerance is as inevitable in the youth of a movement as it is in the youth of a human being. Supposing Fascismo were to be the first step towards the Democracy in which he believed. . . .

His reflections were disturbed by the uproar and cheering in the streets, and as soon as he went to the front of the house to look down on the Via Giulia, Beppina burst from her kitchen to tell him the news. He put his manuscript in the drawer of his desk and hurried out to see what degree of truth there might be in the rumours she had collected from the baker, the butcher, and, above all, the greengrocer, whose son was a Carabiniere, and, therefore, omniscient.

The bridges across the river were thronged with Fascisti from Trastevere and a large crowd in the Piazza Venezia cheered the Black Shirts as they turned up the Corso. This, Pietro reflected, was a revolution, although it bore far more resemblance to a long-established national holiday. Most of the shops were shut, but the cafés were crowded with people anxious to gulp down a drink in between two processions. Fascisti who drove past in lorries waved their rifles and revolvers cheerfully rather than menacingly. Near the Via del Tritone, Pietro came across a large crowd breaking into an armourer's shop, but during the whole morning he did not hear a shot fired. There was a great deal of shouting and singing in the Piazza Barberini outside the Fascist headquarters, but when he turned into the side streets on his way to lunch at Ranieri's he rediscovered the calm of a city too steeped in history to be disturbed by the excitements of a one-day revolution.

At the next table in the restaurant sat a Liberal journalist of exceeding bitterness. "It's a bad day for us," he growled.

"Yes, I suppose it is," assented Pietro Moretti, "but I can't quite make up my mind yet. We shall have to see what they can do now that they are in power."

"They've begun by smashing up the machinery of our paper, and they raided every Socialist Club they could find."

"Still, that sort of thing's inevitable. We shall have to give them a chance."

"We've got no alternative, curse them!" lamented the journalist. "I'm going to fight to the last, though, even if we have to write out the paper by hand."

But Pietro Moretti smiled tolerantly. "We'll see how things go. Heaven knows our travesty of democracy has given the Fascisti every excuse. I'd have marched on Rome myself if I happened to think that way."

"Moretti's funking," Pietro heard the journalist saying to a friend as he left the restaurant. "There will be a lot of turncoats like that."

Pietro said nothing, but the libel rankled. He was not a turncoat, and he was just as ready as ever to struggle against the Fascisti. Only they had to show what they could do. Their methods might change. In the past they had been purely destructive. Now they had to build up something new. As he wandered quietly home through the mediæval streets near the Piazza Navona and the Palazzo Farnese he wondered to himself what influence Fascismo was to have on the history of Italy. He wondered if Mussolini realised the burden of responsibility he was taking on his shoulders—the heritage of these great buildings designed centuries ago in Italy's golden age. There was a renascence of energy, of belief in Italy's great future; but would there be that tolerance and understanding without which the new movement would be a mere tyranny, spurred on by materialism and militarism? "We'll see how things go," he concluded hopefully to himself as he began climbing the stairs to his flat in the Via Giulia.

He found papers on the staircase, and the door of the workmen's club had been smashed and splintered. His own door stood open and it bore signs of having been battered by some heavy, pointed instrument. The word "*Vigliacco*" was chalked across one panel of it. He did not pause to resent the lie. He was not a coward, and no man had the right to call him one,

but he hurried in to see how his belongings had fared in his absence.

The *salotto* was untouched, but in his study he found heartrending disorder. His desk had been smashed by an axe, which lay forgotten near his overturned inkstand on the carpet. Beppina was huddled, frightened and sobbing, on the divan. The drawer in which he had left his manuscript had been dragged open and all the papers it had contained had disappeared.

Pietro Moretti suddenly felt very tired. He consoled Beppina listlessly and assured her that the destruction did not matter. He paid little attention to her story, as though it bore no relation to his own affairs. He even found detached amusement in her description of the fervour with which she had tried to protect her master's possessions. The Socialist Club had come off very badly because its members had refused to open the doors. Through half-closed shutters she had watched as all the club's furniture and papers were piled on to lorries to serve as fuel on some triumphant bonfire. When the hammering had begun on Pietro's front door she had plucked up courage and had opened it, hoping to save the flat from similar treatment. To a certain degree she had succeeded, for her explanation that Moretti the Communist (as they had called him) was brother of Moretti, the *Seniore* of the Fascisti, had tempered the destructive ardour of the invaders. They had left within two or three minutes, but all the papers they had found had gone with them for the inevitable bonfire.

Pietro sent her out of the room and sat down to think. Four years of his life had been given up to this bundle of manuscript which might, even now, be turning into grey ash to be dispersed in all directions

when the night breeze blew up the Tiber. He remembered the discussions with other officers, when they were resting behind the line, which had led him to undertake the task, the quiet hours spent, almost reverently, among old, parchment-covered volumes in the Biblioteca Nazionale, the feeling of immense satisfaction with which, so few hours ago, he had written the last words of the last paragraph. So much time, energy, hope—all wasted!

Suddenly action became imperative. He might still find his manuscript and somehow recover it. He hurried out to the streets, where the setting sun shone on old red and yellow buildings and severe, grey *palazzi*. He found a cab and told the driver to take him as near as he could to "wherever all the fun was." And when the crowd in the Via del Tritone made further progress impossible except on foot, he hurriedly paid the cabman and pushed his way so ruthlessly through the throng towards the Piazza Barberini that people stood back without protest, convinced that he must be one of the important figures of the new *régime*.

Along one side of the Piazza, near the walls of the Hôtel Bristol, were three or four large bonfires, fed generously by Fascisti who threw on them broken furniture, documents, account books, and letters from lorries that had returned from their raids. For a moment Pietro, watching the excitement in the eyes of the onlookers, was taken back to the bonfires he and his brother had been wont to build in the garden of the Tuscan villa to which their mother had brought them in the summer. For a moment he, too, felt that strange elation in witnessing destruction which man carries in him from boyhood to the grave. Most of the Fascisti laughing round the fires, singing patriotic

songs, waving their rifles in greeting to comrades who passed in motor cars and lorries, were themselves scarcely more than children and, in the excitement of success, they had dropped those marks of fierce determination which they wore habitually in imitation of their leader, Mussolini. Pietro shared their joy in the devouring flames.

But then the realisation of his own loss came to him again. Each letter, each document, each account book even was evidence of organisation, co-operation, human effort towards some end. The end might be mistaken, but this ignominious and public mocking of ambitions had something revolting and indecent about it. Natural enough, of course, in the circumstances, his sense of tolerance reminded him, but revolting all the same. His own loss gave him a more poignant appreciation of the loss that these columns of smoke represented. Four years of labour lost—and worse than lost, since the time he had devoted to a useless history of democracy might have been devoted to a study of these new forces that had overthrown democracy. He was still a young man—still under forty—but, staring at this scene of cheerful destruction, he felt out of touch, unable to understand, like an old man who has forgotten the impulses and inspirations of youth.

He turned with a start as some one caught hold of his arm. Gino stood beside him, his face strikingly grim in comparison with the faces of his more irresponsible comrades. "An extraordinary coincidence," he said. "Come to the Bristol. I've something to give you there." Then he paused and shook his head. "No, perhaps you'd better stay here. You're not one of us, and there might be trouble if I took you in, you see. I'll be back in a second if you'll wait here."

He turned on his heel and disappeared into the hotel.

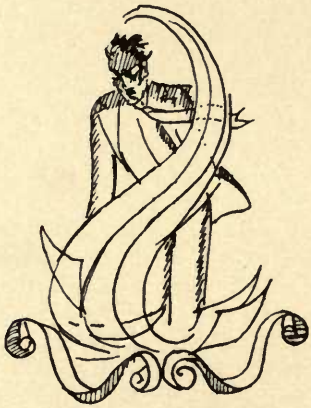
When he came back he had a large bundle of manuscript under his arm. "Some one threw it out of a lorry on to a bonfire," he explained, "and I happened to be here at the time. I recognised your writing, and got it out as quickly as I could. I'm afraid the last few pages are burnt, but I think the rest is all right. You're lucky, and I wonder if I ought not to have let the damned stuff burn." He thrust the "History of Democracy" into his brother's arms and hurried off on some mission.

Pietro Moretti stood for an eternity watching the symbolical destruction of political liberty. Possibly political liberty was, in any case, a dangerous farce—he remembered the case of Horatio Bottomley in England—but he had fought for it as long as he had been politically conscious. If one could only assure the benevolence of an autocracy . . . ! If only Democracy could once be given a fair trial before the vested interests which might be endangered by it brought all their power to bear to destroy it and distort it . . . ! If only . . . ! If only . . . !

He pulled himself together with an exclamation of impatience. What was the good of standing here dreaming of events that had not occurred instead of recognising his defeat? Who cared, now, about the history of democracy? Gino—generous old Gino—had pulled the manuscript out of the fire, but not because he respected it, believed in it, but because he was fond of his twin brother. There had been, it seemed to Pietro, something expressive of pity in the way in which Gino had thrust the manuscript into his hands and then had hurried away. Something of chivalry towards a beaten foe as well as affection for an

only brother. It hurt, that pity! It emphasised his failure. His labours, his long hours in libraries, his careful writing and re-writing had all resulted in so much rubbish.

Pietro Moretti suddenly moved towards the bonfire, opened his arms, and let fall his thick bundle of manuscript. A few sheets fluttered out of danger, but the flames seized on the others greedily. There was a little cheer to welcome this handsome addition to the bonfire's fuel and the evening's enjoyment, and people looked at him with a childish blending of gratitude and admiration in their eyes. As soon as the flames began to die down, Pietro Moretti turned away towards the solitude of the Pincio Gardens with their large view over the jumbled buildings of the Eternal City mellowed by the calm light of evening.



Stojanka the Peacemaker

Stojanka the Peacemaker[1]

I

BASILE STAVROPOULOS, the Greek sentry, sat on the mountain side with his Bulgarian colleague and cursed his Government. "Yes, they're all wrong to treat the refugees like that. I agree with you, Gavril, it's a shame. But, you see, we've got all our own Greeks from Asia Minor and Thrace. They've got to go somewhere and the Government puts them in the homes of the Macedonian refugees. It's not we Greeks who are to blame. It's those damned Turks,

[1] The student of foreign affairs will not fail to realise that this story was inspired by the Greco-Bulgarian dispute of October, 1925. If he is a close student, however, he will also realise that Stojanka never existed except in the author's imagination, and that the sequels to the frontier incident as described here bear no relation to the actual frontier incident of 1925.

who drove them out of their homes. Been in Asia Minor for centuries, many of them."

"To hell with the Turks," agreed Gavril Miletich. He was cleaning his bayonet by digging it in the earth and he gave a jab of extra violence to show what he thought of his former allies in the Great War. "But to hell with the Governments, too. It's not only the way they treat these refugees. Look at us. Here have I been up in this blasted frontier post for five months without relief. It's enough to make a fellow go mad."

"And I nearly six," said the Greek. "It's true I got into trouble with the Colonel at Salonica. But it's nonsense to punish a man for the disappearance of a few drachmas by exiling him to this place. Besides, they shouldn't be such fools as to leave their money about."

Gavril nodded in sympathy and gazed over the barren mountains that had been his home for so long. "Post 178," where he was stationed, was a miserable block-house which he shared with the corporal and five other privates. Forty yards away, across the frontier, was the Greek "Post 11," but no other building was in sight. The nearest Greek village, a mere jumble of straw huts, was three miles away and you had to tramp for well over an hour along the rough cart track that was miscalled a road before you could reach a few Bulgarian cottages and a little house where they sold drink. Basile Stavropoulos had good reason to curse Athens for exiling him here, and he, in his turn, cursed Sofia.

Outside the Bulgarian block-house, three soldiers, clad only in breeches and boots, were busily washing their shirts in an old wooden tub. All the Greeks except Basile Stavropoulos were asleep. One other

person was in sight—a few hundred yards away a girl followed her flock of mountain sheep in their search for nourishment on these rocky slopes. Gavril shaded his eyes with his hand to look at her. Stojanka without a doubt. Even at this distance he could distinguish between her slim figure and the burly silhouettes of the few Bulgarian or Koutso-Vlach shepherds who were to be found near the frontier.

Basile Stavropoulos saw her too. "Yes, Stojanka," he said, "and a fine girl if ever there was one. That's why I curse my Government. Fancy turning her out of Greece. We could do with more like her. I've always looked on her as a Greek and I wish to Heaven she were. Hardly ever see her now since they sent her across the frontier. Even though she's a Bulgarian they ought to have left her where she was. And you should see the Greeks who've been put in her house. They come from somewhere on the Black Sea and have the damned cheek to look down on us other Greeks. And, what's more, they're as ugly as sin. Yes, it's a pity about Stojanka. I was just getting along well with her when she had to go."

How well? wondered Gavril jealously. Every moment he could snatch away from his post he spent with her and, despite her mocking manner, it would not be his fault if, before another week had passed, she failed to become either his fiancee or his mistress. Mistress if possible, for he proposed to have a pretty lively time when he escaped from this God-forsaken spot, and engagement or marriage would make things more difficult. Still, this Greek talked of her with too proprietary an air. If there were any truth in his insinuation, Stojanka might even now be waiting about to see Basile rather than himself. Her sheep would do better farther down the valley, and until now he

had always imagined that she drove them up to this bleak spot in order to see him, and not some wretched Greek. His jealousy made him aggressive.

"I wouldn't talk too much about her if I were you," he said, "because she might quite well be my wife before very long. Anyhow, she's very devoted to me."

Basile Stavropoulos guffawed. "A nice sort of wife! I'd sleep with her, but I wouldn't marry her. She's had too many lovers in her time."

The insult hurt Gavril's pride even more than his affection for Stojanka. He'd teach the Greek to talk like that about a woman whom he looked upon almost as his property. He called him a number of names which are unpalatable to any Greek. Basile replied, and in an instant they were struggling on the ground.

They were fairly evenly matched and might have wrestled until both were exhausted without either being the victor. The three Bulgarians left their washing and came to enjoy the fun. Most of the sentries who were detailed to this mountain frontier were fellows whose characters were not without blemish and squabbles between them occurred almost every day. But suddenly Basile Stavropoulos got to his feet and snatched up his enemy's bayonet, which lay on the rock on which they had been sitting. As he turned with it in his hand, Gavril seized his rifle. He fired from the hip, and the Greek sentry fell dead on the hillside. This, thought the other Bulgarians, was rather more serious than the usual disputes. Furthermore, their corporal was away on sick leave, and Gavril himself was in charge of "Post 178." The Greeks came stumbling sleepily out of their hut, bringing their rifles with them, and Gavril acted quickly. "Come on, fellows," he shouted, "we're being attacked. Line the crest at once and give them hell." And, as the Bul-

garians ran to get their rifles and ammunition, the Greek sergeant ordered his men to open fire.

Taking cover behind rocks that hid her from the Greek post, Stojanka, leaving her flock to its own devices, crept up to where Gavril lay on the hillside. She was excited, but certainly not afraid. "What's the matter?" she asked.

Here was Gavril's chance. "The Greek dog made insinuations about you, so I killed him. I'd have stood most things from Stavropoulos, but not that."

Stojanka squeezed his hand gratefully. "Give them what they deserve," she said. "I've not forgotten that they turned me and thousands of other Bulgarians out of Greece. I want to help. What can I do?"

Gavril pondered. He must think out every step carefully, as befitted a commander in time of war. "You had better go back to Mazendra and warn the Militia. We shall need everyone we can get. Anyone who's got a pick or a hayfork. But, before you go, come here; quick." He caught hold of her and kissed her violently on the lips.

"I'm glad you killed that Greek," she said fiercely, and ran down the hillside, well content that her honour should have been avenged in so undeserved a way. Whatever Stavropoulos had said of her was probably true, since he knew her much better than Gavril did. But in certain circumstances it was rather pleasant to have people defending her on account of virtues she did not possess.

The body of Basile Stavropoulos remained where it had fallen. Later on experts of every kind were to argue the point as to whether it lay on Greek or Bulgarian territory, but, as a matter of fact, nobody knew and, at the time, nobody cared. To the Greek and Bulgarian soldiers exiled in their miserable posts

the vagaries of the frontier line mattered much less than the distance of the nearest villages, the nearest women and the nearest inns.

Neither Post had a telephone, but an excited soldier brought the news of the attack to the nearest Greek reserves, in the village of Resnica, and a second messenger carried an exaggerated report of it to Siderocastro. On the Bulgarian side Stojanka had done her work effectively. Farmers and peasants, some with rifles obtained from the mayors of their villages and some with scythes, knives or hayforks, tramped up the valley to the frontier. With them marched Stojanka, desperately proud of the fact that all this excitement, all the firing she could hear from the distance, was caused by a squabble between two men over her.

Prouder moments were to come to her. A Greek officer with a white flag was shot dead as he approached the frontier to try to put an end to the dispute. When the news of the incident reached Athens in the early hours of the morning, it had been exaggerated almost beyond recognition. The few Bulgarian peasants had become a battalion of infantry, and there were reports that the Bulgarian army was attacking in force to grab an outlet to the sea, so often claimed in vain by the more peaceful methods of diplomacy and propaganda. The Ministry of War took the matter very seriously, and it was decided, at an emergency meeting of the Cabinet, that an advance must be made into Bulgarian territory to invest the town of Mazendra and to prevent further concentrations of Bulgarian troops. The dispute between Gavril and Basile Stavropoulos over the morals of Stojanka had become an international incident.

The General in command of the Twentieth Army Corps read through the text of the ultimatum to

Sofia with satisfaction. "We shall teach these fellows a lesson they will never forget," he declared fiercely.

"Fortunately they are almost unarmed," put in a tactless staff captain. Catching his chief's eye he thought it wise to amend his statement. "Although, of course, that makes very little difference," he added. "We could wipe the ground with them anyhow."

II

Bulgaria was celebrating the anniversary of a victory over the Turks some centuries earlier, and took no notice of the trouble on the southern frontier. Such incidents had happened frequently in the past and would doubtless continue to happen with similar frequency in the future. The officials of the Ministry of War ate, drank and were merry, and by the time the Chief of the General Staff understood the gravity of the whole business the Greek troops were already advancing across Bulgarian soil. "This means war," said the Chief of Staff. "We shall have to wipe these Greeks off the face of the earth."

"It's a nuisance. The Treaty of Neuilly has left us almost disarmed," suggested an aide-de-camp.

The Chief of the General Staff glowered at him. "Can't we beat the Greeks with our fists?" he demanded.

"Yes, of course, sir. Of course we can," replied the young officer with alacrity.

The Cabinet and the Sobranje were a little less confident, and orders were given to the Army to show no resistance to the Greeks pending the result of diplomatic intervention. Stojanka and her fellow-refugees once more packed up their few belongings on to handcarts and trundled them northwards before the

invaders. She walked proudly, remembering that all this trouble had arisen from a quarrel about her and her morals. She felt no qualms of conscience, but considerable regret that the Bulgarian infantry continued to retreat and that the Bulgarian artillery had not, as yet, fired a single shot. People talked vaguely about an appeal to something called the League of Nations, but what was the good of a step like that while a single Bulgarian had a single cartridge or a single hayfork?

III

Ivan Deane produced a pink card and a fat Swiss gendarme stood aside to allow him to enter the journalists' door of the League of Nations Council Room. He found there some fifty colleagues from different European capitals. Behind them crowded a few score of distinguished visitors—Ministers, diplomats, wives of delegates, American Senators, big-wigs of the "Republic and Canton of Geneva." At the other end of the room, on a raised daïs, fourteen slightly self-conscious gentlemen sat at a large table covered with red baize. Before each of them was a neat pad of blotting paper and an adequate supply of new pens and pencils, but decorative brass inkstands showed that they were not really candidates sitting for a belated examination. Ten of them, in fact, were members of the League of Nations Council; one, seated next to the British Foreign Secretary, who presided, was the Secretary-General of the League; another was the Greek Foreign Minister, another was the Bulgarian Minister from Rome, and between these two, as though to prevent them from carrying on their war in this room, was the official interpreter. Behind these fourteen people sat

or stood the "supers"—secretaries and experts with large portfolios, members of the League Secretariat clasping documents.

The advance, explained the Greek Foreign Secretary, was a measure of legitimate defence against the Bulgarian attack. The only legitimate defence, stated Lord Stanning, the British Foreign Secretary, was an appeal to the League, which existed to settle disputes of this nature and to which every Member State was obliged to turn in the event of a crisis. The Dutch representative and the Japanese Ambassador in Madrid asked whether all troops had already been withdrawn behind their own frontiers, and the French Foreign Minister, M. Dardiet, scribbled a few words on a piece of paper and passed it round the table. Each member of the Council nodded his approval of it, and M. Dardiet held a long, whispered conversation with his English colleague while the Greek and Bulgarian awaited the sentence.

Lord Stanning read out a draft resolution. The troops were to be withdrawn within two days, and, as soon as this withdrawal had been carried out, a special Commission would be sent to decide who was to blame for the incident, and how similar incidents could be prevented in the future. The Council requested the Greek and Bulgarian representatives to send off telegrams to this effect without delay and to give an assurance that there would be no more shooting.

The Bulgarian Minister at once agreed, and thanked the Council for its prompt intervention. Lord Stanning turned to the Greek Foreign Minister, who drummed his pencil nervously against his ornate inkstand. "Your Excellency will, I hope, give the Council a similar assurance?" he asked.

The silence was only broken by messengers who came

in and out of the room to fetch telegrams to the news agencies in different parts of the world. On one side of Ivan Deane sat a Greek journalist who tried to scribble in Greek characters a description of the scene; on the other side was an energetic correspondent who took down every word of the debate in German shorthand. The whole world was represented in this room. The whole world waited to see if Greece was going to make good her initial mistake or was going to defy the fifty States who were Members of the League. At length the Greek Foreign Minister nodded his head. He would telegraph the necessary instructions to Athens without delay, and all firing should cease at once.

The telegram reached Athens just in time for a massed attack on Mazendra to be cancelled. Quietly the Greek soldiers turned about and marched back towards their own frontier. Stojanka stood by the roadside and shook her fists at them as they went. One or two threatened her, but most of them affected not to see her. They drove cattle before them and some carried bundles of loot. Those Bulgarian peasants to whom Stojanka had boasted her share in the adventure turned on her and cursed her for the loss of their possessions, but she gave them better than she got and stuck her head up in the air. Even the loss of the cattle was of trifling importance compared with the fact that she had become a personage of renown. Had not two Americans and a Frenchman talked to her at great length that very morning outside the straw hut which she shared with ten other refugees? Had they not assured her that papers all over Europe and North America—wherever that was—would print what she said, and had not one of the Americans insisted on taking her photograph?

Even now she had not reached the height of her fame, for the members of the League of Nations Commission of Inquiry questioned her about the causes of the dispute, and the Mayor of Mazendra later sent for her to tell her that her story had, according to the Bulgarian papers, been referred to in the Commission's Report. For weeks she could talk of nothing but the League of Nations, although she had no idea what it was or how it worked. Even her sheepdog had to listen to long discourses about it, and he soon learnt to wag his tail enthusiastically whenever it was mentioned. He was more appreciative than Gavril Miletich, who became jealous of it. Sharing her glory, he was also allowed, in secret, to share her couch of sacks and straw, but his own struggle with Basile Stavropoulos seemed to strike Stojanka as of very trivial importance, now that she had photographs of herself, cut out of American and English newspapers.

For a few weeks her glory seemed to fade, but again the League of Nations came to her rescue. It established elaborate machinery for the rapid settlement of minor frontier incidents, and it sent a Cuban General to reorganise the whole system of frontier guards and to act as mediator in any dispute. On his first trip along the frontier, accompanied by a Greek and a Bulgarian officer and by three journalists in search of a story, he came across Stojanka and her flock of sheep. The Bulgarian officer explained that it was over this slip of a girl the dispute at "Post 178" had arisen, and the General, who had an eye for a good figure, beamed at her. "I'm not surprised," he declared. "Any man would fight for you."

Stojanka smiled up at him with fictitious shyness, and he wished very much that his companions were miles away. Or at least on the farther side of the

mountain ridge. Tactless fellows, these journalists and Balkan officers!

"And now I'm here to see there are no further incidents," he said grandiloquently. "There must be peace along the frontier. Peace for the first time in generations. It will be all due to you, Stojanka. Stojanka the Peacemaker—eh?"

The journalists wrote articles for their newspapers on their tour in the Balkans, and having, like the General, appreciative eyes for a good figure, they devoted much too much space to descriptions of Stojanka the Peacemaker minding her sheep in the mountains of Southern Bulgaria. Had it not been for her beauty, they explained, Basile Stavropoulos would not have been killed, the League of Nations would not have intervened, and the Cuban General would not now be living in the Balkans to prevent disputes from arising on the Greco-Bulgarian frontier. Every time an incident was settled through the League procedure the newspapers referred to Stojanka the Peacemaker, and the photographic agencies sent round to the illustrated weeklies attractive pictures of this bare-footed shepherdess. The Mayor of Mazendra, who also had an eye for a good figure, faithfully read out to her all the translations of articles about her which were printed in the Bulgarian papers and her fame spread throughout the region. And as she became more and more associated, in the public mind, with the era of peace and prosperity along the frontier, even some of her neighbours began to think they must have misjudged her in the past. In more than one hovel there was quarrelling because some husband suggested it would bring good fortune to have her photograph stuck up on the wall and some wife called her an immoral slut. She was becoming, even in her own estimation, the heroine of a legend,

and more and more she left her flocks to the care of willing youths while she flaunted up and down the one street of Mazendra.

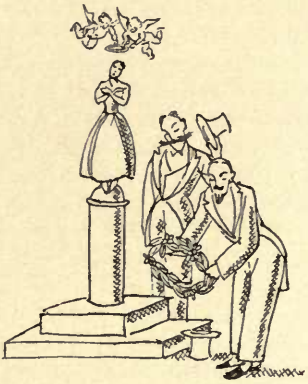
The only person who did not, to her very great annoyance, appear to realise her importance was Gavril Miletich. He had finished his military service and had set up as a saddler, but he was very sparing with his earnings and very jealous. He quarrelled with the young men who tended her sheep for her, and one day, when he found that she had been visiting the Mayor of Mazendra on a mission which seemed to have nothing to do with flattering articles in the newspapers, he had a violent dispute with her. She scoffed at him for his naïve belief in her innocence in the past, and gave him details of her relations with Basile Stavropoulos and other men before and since which angered him beyond words. There was a brief struggle in his little shop, and she died at his hands, strangled with a stirrup leather.

Gavril Miletich fled to join the *Komitadjis*, in very low water since the frontier had become so orderly, and thus missed the most impressive funeral that had ever been known in the Okrug of Mazendra. A poetically-minded official suggested that Stojanka the Peacemaker should be buried on the mountain side near "Post 178," and the inhabitants of the district, whipped up by the Mayor, subscribed for an ugly marble monument over her grave. The more superstitious soldiers from "Post 178" planted flowers on the mound of earth that covered her, and, now that she was out of the way, wives agreed with their husbands that pictures of her should be hung on their cottage walls. The foreign newspapers printed paragraphs announcing the fact, but not the manner, of her death and the photographic agencies hunted up dusty por-

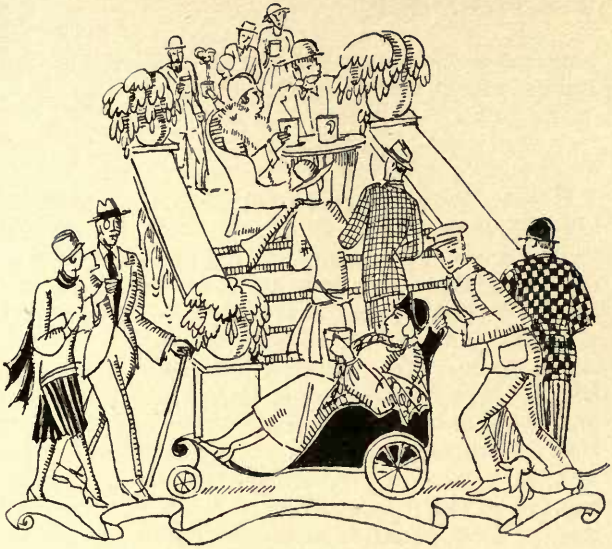
traits of Stojanka, the girl who had brought peace to the Balkans.

IV

On the tenth anniversary of the incident of " Post 178 " a strange party of top-hatted gentlemen, accompanied by polite Bulgarian officers, bumped and jolted in motor cars along the dusty road to the frontier. The passengers, stiff and tired, but deeply moved, clambered out with large wreaths on their arms. In religious silence they waited while a Greek colonel crossed the frontier line, bowed to them, and shook his Bulgarian colleagues by the hand. While the guards of the Bulgarian " Post 178 " and the Greek " Post 11 " presented arms, the delegates of the various national societies for the maintenance of peace climbed up the rock-strewn hillside and reverently placed their wreaths on the tomb of Stojanka the Peacemaker.



The Homecoming



The Homecoming

I

PIERRE DRIEUX had often pictured to himself his return to his native Vosges. Sometimes he came home a hero, with the mayor and all the local celebrities on Vittel platform to meet him. Once, during the German attacks on Verdun, when the disorganisation was so complete that he might have slipped away unnoticed, he was saved by the vision of his neighbours' contempt when he descended from the train. Generally he just thought of his father and mother waiting at the station to welcome him back. But never had he imagined a home-coming which bore any resemblance to this. Ever since the train had left Langres the air that came in through the open window had

been heavy with the summer scents he knew so well, and each scent brought back its memories.

II

He was back again in the shade of the copse on the hill-top above Chalmoisson. It was his favourite spot, and whenever he could snatch a moment from his farming he came here to dream of his ambitions. His absurd ambitions that fed themselves on the little glimpses he had of the lives of the elegant rich who came, summer after summer, to drink the waters of Vittel. Many of them were lame, crippled, suffering, but for them his envy was at the most tempered by a kind of contemptuous pity. They had had their fun in life, he told himself, and if they were not strong enough to enjoy themselves, so much the worse for them. Their plight in no wise lessened his own thirst for money and luxury. He did not care that for five generations the family of Drieux had lived in the low, grey house that went by the name of Chalmoisson Farm, and the only spot of its small territory which attracted him was this hill-top from which he could see the Park of Vittel, the *Établissements Thermaux* where people went to take the waters, and the hotels and the Casino where they danced or gambled of an evening.

Pierre Drieux was not given to self-analysis and introspection. He seldom connected his ambitions with the beautiful *étrangère*—she happened to come from Bordeaux, but for him anyone who lived more than a hundred kilometres away was a foreigner—whom he had met one hot June afternoon. She had come upon him while he was cutting hay down by the race-course, and had stood to watch while the gleaming scythe swung rhythmically to and fro, mowing down the

long grass in neat strips. He never guessed how keen was her eye for detail—she had admired the move of the muscles of his bronzed arms, the ruffled untidy hair, the honest grey of his eyes, his white shirt open at the chest and, above all, the sight of this figure standing sturdily in the sunlight against the dark, shaded background of the June larches. Of all this he had known nothing and, until she had called out to him, he had kept up the swing of the scythe, his self-consciousness conquered by the knowledge that what he was doing he did well. After she had turned away he would stop to watch her, to follow the movements of her slender body under its delicate white blouse and skirt.

But she had not turned away. Instead, mischievously, she had called to him, and he had stood as close to her as he dared, with nervous fingerings of the handle of his scythe as he stammered answers to her questions about the way home.

Afterwards he sometimes told himself, with a chuckle, that she had known the way home, since the racecourse was only a hundred yards away, and everyone knew that the Park was at the farther end of the racecourse. She had only wanted an excuse to talk to him.

And then had come the incident of the spider. Here again, he decided when he thought the matter over, she must have been deliberately fooling him, tempting him. There had been no spider crawling across her neck, and, even had there been, she could easily have brushed it away herself. But she had meant him to feel how soft her skin was under his hot fingers. She had deliberately provoked this desire in him—this mingled desire to hold her in his arms and to kiss the hem of her skirt.

Reverence had been stronger than passion even when

she had twisted round and, standing on tiptoe, had unexpectedly kissed him full on the lips. Before he had recovered from his astonishment she was running down the path toward the Park. He had begun to follow her, and she had looked frightened and had threatened to call for help. So that he had stopped, not for fear that anyone would have heard her call, but in dismay that she thought for one moment he would hurt her. And she had gone, a little white figure, tripping away from him by the white railings of the racecourse.

Looking back across the years Pierre Drieux could now see that his absurd ambitions dated from this secret adventure. Before it he had been happy enough with his full days on the farm; after it he was fevered with desire and envy. He hated the men who could afford to come to Vittel for the cure. He despised them, and talked loudly against them in the café of an evening. But he was filled with desire to imitate them. He seized every opportunity to drive into Vittel—to send off some consignment from the station, to fetch something for his mother from the shops, or to order a spare part for the plough—but he never saw the *étrangère* again, and with each visit his feelings towards her changed a little. The reverence disappeared, driven out by desire. What a fool he had been to let her escape, and how she must have despised him for doing so! Not one of these loafers in Vittel, he told himself, would have shown such rustic *naïveté*. Never again would he be such a simpleton. He grew to despise himself for his good qualities and to ape the bad qualities of the men he saw in Vittel. On his hill-top above Chalmoisson he dreamed of the day when he, too, would be as rich—and as vicious—as they were, or as he pictured them to be.

In the *Établissements Thermaux*, which Pierre Drieux

could see from where he lay, people were pierced by light rays of every shade, were massaged, were plunged into baths of starch or sulphur or mud. In consulting rooms they lay naked while doctors drew thoughtful charts in blue pencil on their chests and stomachs to show the alarming size of their various organs. Every morning smart young *chasseurs* from the different hotels set off with their burdens of bottles to be analysed. In the Park itself, so attractive to Pierre Drieux, the visitors lolled around in the sunshine or shade, and " deceived their boredom," as the French say, by going punctually each twenty minutes to fetch another two hundred and fifty grammes of water from the *Grande Source* or the *Source Hépar*. Even in the Casino itself, which to Pierre Drieux marked the limit of human enjoyment, the excellent orchestra was occasionally rendered inaudible by people who grew excited in discussions about their livers or their kidneys. But Pierre Drieux worried, or knew, little about this side of life at Vittel. He only saw that here were desirable women and men who were wealthy enough to win them. Physically he was better than they were and he did not see why he should not become at least their equal in other respects. Whenever he went to Vittel he watched, with greedy eyes, these self-confident girls who passed down the street on their way from their hotels to the Park. Sometimes one of them would make some remark to her friend about this persistent, good-looking young peasant, and they would look at him, between smiling and laughter. But he neither laughed nor smiled back. He was vaguely flattered by their attention, but he was also filled with angry resentment that they should be so provocative and yet so aloof—more provocative with him, even, than with visitors of their own social standing, as though the gulf

between him and them made them safe, and as though he were so infinitely their inferior that his own feelings, his own desires, need not be taken into account at all.

When he drove back towards Chalmoisson he would stop at Legrand's to see Ginette. But this new fever that held him in its grip made him act absurdly. They had grown up almost as brother and sister until this change had come upon him. Partly, perhaps, because she showed only contempt for the little he told her of his social ambitions and partly because he could not help comparing her with the wealthy visitors at the *Établissements Thermaux*, their old comradeship had gone. Instead, he sought relief from his fever in a loutish flirtation with her, and the more the elegant beauties down there in the valley mocked at him, the more brutal and vulgar he became with Ginette. In the end, she refused to come beyond the cottage threshold when he passed, and his jokes, which she would not have minded at all from anyone else, disgusted her. She was not, as far as she knew, in love with him, but this change that had come over him made her oddly unhappy.

III

Even now, after so many years had elapsed, Pierre Drieux felt himself blush with shame at the recollection of his one visit to the Casino. It was a Sunday afternoon, and the race meeting had brought thousands of people to Vittel. He put on his new suit—the extravagance of which had brought his thrifty mother almost to tears and his scornful father almost to apoplexy—his new hat, and his cheap imitation of a fashionable tie, and went boldly up to the Casino terrace to have his coffee. Under big parasols which

screened each table people lounged through the after-luncheon hour and listened sleepily to the orchestra. Most of the men wore beautifully-pressed white trousers and white and brown shoes, but Pierre Drieux told himself that none of them had so rakish a hat or so vivid a tie as he. He was as good as any of them. Every bit as good.

But his bubble burst all too soon. Quite suddenly, and for no special reason, he felt awkward and conspicuous. The waiters wore gold-braided coats like naval officers and they treated him, he felt, with an amused contempt. He was not accustomed to the insolent manners of the rich and attributed far more importance than he should have done to the way in which people stared at him, and others, through their *lorgnons*. He realised that his super-fashionable tie and hat gave him away even more than his rough, red hands, which contrasted so strikingly with the soft white hands of the men who sat near him. One girl, looking in his direction, said something to her companion, and they both laughed. They must, of course, be laughing at him. He must get away, and in his confusion he forgot to pay for his coffee, so that one of the naval officers made him still more conspicuous by stopping him on the steps, in full view of a number of bored visitors anxious for any diversion.

One might have expected Pierre Drieux to abandon his social ambitions after this one mortifying experience. Instead, his hatred of his present life only increased, and he spent hour after hour up by the copse planning methods of growing rich and seeking the courage to take the first step—to leave Chalmoisson and its quiet fields and copses.

IV

The war had taken him away from Chalmoisson. It had even brought him, after its years of destruction, to Paris, where he had learnt, of all absurd things, how to make baskets and brushes ! He smiled bitterly to himself at the thought. If he wanted to he could achieve at least a part of his former ambitions—if he returned to Paris he could earn his living there. But the trouble was he no longer wanted to. The war, that had changed so many things, had changed his desires.

There were few people on the platform at Vittel, for the more elegant visitors came by the *Train des Eaux*, which included nothing so mean as third-class carriages, so that Pierre Drieux attracted considerable attention when he climbed down carefully from his compartment. The station-master shook his hand and wished him well, and then his mother and father, his uncle Emile and a few young farmers who had been at the village school with him closed round him to welcome him. A glorious home-coming in a way, but it meant little to the blind man who had pictured things so differently.

His father and mother, as the trap rattled home towards Chalmoisson, hurried to give him all the local gossip. It was almost as though they were frightened of the silence, heavy with sorrow. Pierre Drieux hardly listened to them. On the right, he knew, were the Park and the *Établissements Thermaux*. A little farther on came the woods, the racecourse and the field where he had been cutting hay that hot afternoon long, so very long, ago. There was the scent of new hay in the air and the sun was warm on his face. Only one thing that was said during the journey—and he did not even notice whether his father or his mother

had said it—remained in his memory. Ginette, one of them told him, was married. Married to Jean Dubois, her father's farm-hand.

"*Tiens*," said Pierre Drieux in a non-committal voice. He was not even sure if he minded. So few things seemed to matter now.

V

Even in the shade of the poplars it was hot, and Pierre Drieux's envy of the haymakers was tempered by sympathy for them working out there in the sun. They had driven in from neighbouring farms to help, and many old friends had come up to where he sat to shake his hand and welcome him home with touching embarrassment. There was Joseph Fouquet and his brother, fat Marcel—how he must be sweating in the sunshine !—Armand Legrand, who had lost an arm in the war, and Jean Dubois, Ginette's husband, and a dozen others, some of whom were strangers to him. Then there were the womenfolk—he could picture them under the shade of their immense black straw hats. Ginette amongst them, and she had replied to his congratulations on her marriage in a voice that was humble and apologetic. Funny to think that, so short a time ago, they had driven home happily on the hay carts and had danced, children, on the half-made ricks !

Hot out here under the poplars, but how peaceful ! If he could stay here for ever it would not be quite so bad. How his ambitions had changed since the war had brought him to cities ! How often in the last few years he had dreamt of the hay-making, remembered the clean swish of his scythe, the hot sun, the

cool beer or wine handed round by his mother whenever the men made a pause, and, at the end of the day, the immense, healthy fatigue that he had never appreciated until it was too late ever to experience it again! And how often, lying by the roadside with his pack and rifle beside him, he had buried his face in the grass and sniffed the scents of the countryside that he once had hated and that he now so loved.

He could not forget the way in which his mother had talked last night. Things had not gone well with the farm since he had left. During the war it had been almost impossible to get help, and his father was growing too old to manage affairs alone. The new farm hands could not be trusted and wanted too much. Too many Frenchmen had been killed during the war, and too many had returned, as he had, maimed and useless, a burden on people who already had burdens as heavy as they could bear. There had been a note of relief in his mother's voice when he had explained how in the hospital for the blind he had learnt a trade. "It will help so," she had said. "You will have to stay here, of course. It's your home."

"But I shall never sell anything here," he had explained. "It would probably mean living in Paris."

And he could tell—for he had become so much more perceptive since he lost his sight—that she was uncertain. Could they afford to keep him, she was asking herself, or ought he to return to the City? She had even reminded him of his former ambition to leave the quiet life of the country—and had stopped short, as though she realised a little of the change that had come about in him since he went to the war.

Pierre Drieux rolled over on his stomach and buried his face in the long grass. There must be flowers and

insects of all sorts. At first these insects which he could no longer see had filled him with a kind of unthinking horror when he felt their minute feet on his skin. But now he had developed quite a friendly interest in them, and he amused himself by wondering what they were. He fingered the flowers, and tried to remember their colours. He listened to all the noise of the life going on around him.

Someone passed close to him, and he called out. It was Ginette, and he asked her if she had a moment to spare. He would like, he said, to go up to the copse on the hill-top, and he was not sure enough of himself to find his way there alone.

Ginette placed her hand timidly in his, and led him slowly up the hill. Here was the gate through which they used to pass on the hay carts. Yes, the old shed with the swallows' nests under its eaves still stood over there in the corner. Her brother had not had much luck with his wheat, and was now trying with artichokes. The cherries had failed altogether this year and the hay crop was poor. Her husband hoped to inherit the Legrand's farm, for Armand was not much use with one arm. Besides, his ambitions, too, had changed, and he talked of opening a small shop at Nancy ("The fool," thought Pierre Drieux, "and he still with the use of his eyes!"). She had been married for nearly a year and she was to have a child in two or three weeks.

She brought him to the spot where, of old, he had dreamed so many absurd dreams, and stood over him, chattering. And she was full of sympathy, a sympathy that hurt. She, who had eyes, could not see that he wanted to be alone. Who had eyes! She could see, then, these gentle, forest-clad hills for which he had so often longed. She could see the butterflies and the

hurried little birds; the grey, lichened walls of Chalmoisson; the rows of poplars along the road to Vittel; the Park and the buildings erected for useless visitors; the billowing, white clouds—he knew just how the clouds would be with a breeze such as that which freshened the hill-top; the buzzards hanging lazily in the sky; perhaps a kestrel, with brown wing-tips quivering. . . .

She was talking about Paris now, asking eager questions to which he gave no reply. She, who had eyes, could not see that he could not bear it. Could not see how much he longed to be alone. Could not see how little he wanted to think or talk of Paris, when, behind him was the larch copse with all its quiet, dark life, when below him were the grey walls of his home and the lines of tall poplars flanking the straight, white road.

"You had better go, Ginette," he said gently.

But she, who had eyes, could not see, could not understand. "Jean is not jealous," she replied coquettishly.

He almost hated her. In a week or two she would bear a child. A son who would look on this valley as his home, whose birthright would be this country for which Pierre Drieux had stood in muddy, bloody trenches, and fought; who would, perhaps, come up as a youngster to this very hill-top and dream the silly dreams that had been his. . . .

"You had better go, Ginette," he repeated. "I want to be alone."

"Oh, very well, then. I'll go." She, who had eyes, could not see that Pierre Drieux spoke harshly because he was suffering. She tossed back her head, and left him without another word. "Another one," she said to herself as she went down to the hay-field,

" another one whom the war sends back to us changed and spoiled."

Pierre Drieux, who had at last come home, buried his face in his hands and tears welled up in his sightless eyes.

The Patriot

The Patriot

I

THE train drew up in Drăneşti station, and a group of gentlemen in their best clothes collected outside the special carriage that the Military Governor of Bessarabia had placed at Deane's disposal to bring him from Kishinev, the capital. This special carriage was used less often by the Governor himself than by military attachés, journalists and other foreigners who had let it be known that they wanted to see how matters stood in Bessarabia since that province had ceased to be part of Russia and had become part of Rumania. It had, nevertheless, rather overawed Deane, and he felt very self-conscious as he left its faded splendour and, with two smart Rumanian officers with swords and, he imagined, corsets, went to meet the officials on the platform.

There was a jovial colonel commanding the garrison there, the mayor, the prefect, a few other military

and civilian officials, and, *mirabile dictu*, Cozma Stireanu. He looked older and even smaller than when he had tried to teach Deane something about European history at the Institut St. François in the Latin Quarter, but there was no mistaking his black, beady eyes, his tangled, black hair and his small, nervous hands.

When he recognised Deane he insisted on kissing him on both cheeks. "Twelve years ago," he explained to the Mayor and Prefect, a little scandalised to see their distinguished guest treated with such familiarity, "*Domnul* Deane was my pupil in Paris. He lived at a place where I used to give lessons." He turned to Deane and overwhelmed him with questions. Did he know what had become of the director of the Institut, M. Pommeret? Had he ever passed his Doctorat at the Sorbonne? Was the Café d'Harcourt still in existence? And the Closerie des Lilas? What had he done since the war? How long was he staying in Rumania? What did Englishmen think about Bessarabia?

Before Deane could begin to reply, the Mayor, the Prefect and the Colonel ushered him, urged him with gestures, to a rather dilapidated motor car. Cozma Stireanu, with the other notabilities of Drăneşti, was left to walk over the rough, frozen mud that covered the road to the village. "I'll see you in a few minutes," he shouted cheerily, and the car began its bumpy journey to the fortress and the village on the banks of the river Dniester.

"It's strange you should know Stireanu," said the Prefect to make conversation—and conversation was difficult, for Deane knew neither Russian nor Rumanian, while his hosts could talk very little German or French. "He's a great character hereabouts. He

was one of the first Rumanians to come from abroad to settle down here, and he's worked like the devil. He's the local schoolmaster, but he's got a little land as well, so that he can afford to dabble in politics without being a party man. Everyone interested in the province reads his articles in the *Vocea Basarabiei*, but the only trouble is that he's much too keen, and is always expecting the Government in Bucarest to produce money for all his schemes."

Deane listened rather half-heartedly, for he was thinking of his time as a student in Paris. Little Cozma Stireanu had eked out a pretty miserable existence in those days. Few Englishmen before the war had ever heard of Bessarabia, but every Englishman who had come in contact with this little Rumanian could tell you how the province had been taken by the Russians in 1812 as a reward for their help against the Turks, how one day it would break away and its inhabitants would join up with the other Moldavians who now bore the name of Rumanians, how the older Rumanians in the province had carried on passive resistance against the Tsardom by refusing to learn a word of Russian. Stireanu and others like him had been exiled for their political activities, and those who had not settled down in Rumania itself had become wanderers on the face of the earth. Stireanu, despite the surveillance of the Tsar's Ochrana agents, who were numerous in Paris, had devoted so much time in his history lessons to his native province that the less respectful of his Anglo-Saxon pupils had nicknamed him "Bessarabian Billy." Deane might have guessed that "Bessarabian Billy" would find his way back to his home as soon as Tsarism collapsed and Bessarabia proclaimed, first its autonomy and then its union with the Rumanian Kingdom.

The car stopped outside the ruins of the fortress that had been built on the banks of the Dniester by the Genoese in the days of their prosperity. Part of the fortress was now a barracks, and sentries posted along the walls stared anxiously across the narrow river at the rather dreary plains of Bolshevik Russia. Just beneath the fortress were the ruins of a bridge that had been blown up in the Russo-Rumanian fighting after the Revolution, and this river valley still cut off all contact between the two peoples. Refugees of one sort and another and, occasionally, Jewish merchants with jewels and furs to sell managed to cross the Dniester at night, but the suspicion with which these unwelcome visitors were met served to widen rather than to bridge the abyss. With awe in their gestures, officers handed field glasses to Ivan Deane and urged him to study the distant towers of Tiraspol and the few farm-houses that dotted the plain, as though to persuade him that there was something mysterious and sinister in the sight of a building inhabited by a citizen of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

"You see, we never know when we may be attacked," explained Cozma Stireanu. "The Russians refuse to recognise the right of Bessarabia to join Rumania. They plot to recapture it, they spend millions on propaganda, they envy us our rich vineyards and our fertile soil. Bessarabia is on the way to Constantinople, and they still want Constantinople."

"Almost as though I were back in Paris," thought Deane, as he listened to the old familiar phrases, slightly modified to suit the new situation.

The little Rumanian seemed to read his thoughts. "I mustn't overwhelm you with propaganda, as some of my compatriots try to do," he said. "Tell me about Paris and London. We see so few people up

here. The Prefect tells me you are staying two days, and I hope you will stay with us. My daughter will be delighted. You were to have been the guest of the Mayor, but, if you allow it, you will stay with me instead, since you are an old friend. We cannot offer you much in the way of hospitality, but I hope you will excuse that."

"But I don't want to be a nuisance. I mean, it will cause you a lot of trouble," stammered Deane.

"Please come," urged Stireanu. "Let's speak to the Mayor about it now. It will give me such pleasure, and you don't know how glad my daughter will be to hear about the outside world. It's a bit dull for a young girl here," he concluded rather sadly.

It must be, thought Deane, as they trooped along the one street of Drăneşti. In his three hours' journey from Kishinev he had seen perhaps a dozen human beings, and of these at least eight had been wild-looking shepherds who watched their flocks on the hills that flanked the railway. Drăneşti itself did not seem to be an exciting spot to choose as one's home. There was one central road, considerably wider than Piccadilly, but unpaved, and so muddy by nature that he thanked Heaven for the severe frost which made it mountainous but hard. Pigs and geese wandered here and there disconsolately. At the windows of each of the one-storied houses were groups of Bessarabians—Rumanians, Russians, Tziganes and Jews—excited by the presence of so many people in their main street. Stireanu's daughter, whom he had once met in Paris when he had called to fetch some book or other, had been then a grubby little girl of eight or so, which would mean that she must now be twenty. A girl of twenty, accustomed to the bustle and colour of Paris, living, alone with her father, in this remote Bessa-

rabian village! No, not very much fun for her here, thought Deane to himself.

The party trooped into the only house with two stories in the village. In a big room on the ground floor lunch had been laid, and the cheap crockery, the plates which did not match, the pages from *La Vie Parisienne* pasted on the walls, all reminded Deane of some officers' mess in France or Flanders. There was something "temporary" about it all. There was still the possibility of a Bolshevik attack, and there was not yet anything to show that these people had come to settle down in Drăneşti for the rest of their lives.

This impression of being isolated in a strange land was deepened by the joy with which Stireanu listened to Deane's gossip about Paris, London and Berlin. "My daughter will be so pleased," the little man kept saying. "We see so few foreigners here."

Their appreciation of foreigners was emphasised by the many speeches that were made to welcome Ivan Deane, to pay compliments to his paper and to flatter his country. Each speech was followed by toasts, and by three o'clock in the afternoon Ivan Deane was convinced that Bessarabia was the finest place on earth. He made some such suggestion to Stireanu, whose little eyes sparkled with delight. "Now you can understand why I've given up my life in Paris," he said. "Of course, it's lonely at times, and one misses all the intellectual life, the concerts, the theatres. But we get away occasionally to Kishinev, where the theatre isn't bad. It's a magnificent country, with magnificent work to do. You've had a chance already to see how backward the Russians kept the whole place. Well, we've got to pull it up. It isn't easy, for Bucarest sends us its worst type of official. There's a certain amount of bribery and a lot of incom-

petence. . . ." He seemed suddenly to recollect that he was talking to a foreigner, to whom nothing but good must be said of his country—" but there are others who are giving up everything, and who work like the devil. Besides, what can you expect? The Government can't afford to pay its employees properly. A full colonel only gets about £100 a year. You have to remember that the Russians have never paid us back our gold reserve which we sent to Moscow when the Germans occupied our territory. . . ."

As gently as might be Deane changed the subject, for dozens of Rumanians had told him all about the gold reserve and the other very real impediments to Rumania's rapid recovery from the war. He persuaded Stireanu to tell him more of his day-to-day life in this overgrown, untidy village, and he marvelled at the little man's enthusiasm. There had been disappointments, he gathered, but the country was so rich in natural resources and so full of promise that nobody could live there without being inspired by it.

" Give Stireanu some more vodka," shouted the Colonel jovially. " That's the only advantage of Bessarabia—that we can get real vodka. Good eelth, Mister ! " and he raised his glass once more to Deane.

" *Prosit !* " said the Prefect, who had studied in Germany, and again Deane had to empty his glass.

" *À votre santé !* " said Stireanu, and Deane did his duty like a man.

But he was not sorry when, as dusk began to fall, the Mayor, the Prefect and the rest of them left him and his host on Stireanu's doorstep. " Of course, it's a little dull for Malca," said Stireanu *à propos de* nothing in particular. " I'm sometimes a little sorry for her. She hasn't quite got the spirit of the place yet."

Malca, Deane soon realised, was very sorry for herself. She was short and dark like her father, but strikingly pretty. But the discontented droop at the corners of her mouth already made her less beautiful than she should have been. With the bare-footed servant, she went off, singing, to get a room ready for him, and she was so sincerely delighted to see him and so charming to him that he became quite alarmed. Certainly nobody before had ever listened to him with more attention or questioned him more thoroughly.

Has the Rue de la Paix altered much? Are there still as many foreigners in Paris? Have they reopened the Bal Bullier? What is London like? Is living terribly expensive? Could one exist on six thousand *lei* a month? Malca fired off her questions at him, and she was so eager to get his replies that she dragged her chair across until it almost touched his.

Stireanu listened to the conversation with an expression of uneasiness on his face. "Of course, it's very dull for Malca," he agreed, "but Bessarabia has all sorts of advantages. You see it in winter, the very worst time of the year."

"It's dull any time," retorted Malca.

"We shall be able to go to Kishinev more often next year," said her father consolingly. "I'm not so busy as I was."

But Malca was not to be consoled. "Kishinev is only a beastly village," she snorted. "An overgrown village full of Jews and Russians who hate us. You remember how they glared when we went to hear 'Madame Butterfly' with that Russian tenor. The insolence of them!"

"It's very much our fault if they don't all like us," suggested Stireanu mildly. "Some of our officials have acted foolishly. More than half the inhabitants

of Kishinev are Jews, it's true, but that's all the more reason to treat them as ordinary citizens."

"Always the same old story. I'd grind them all down if I had my way—Russians, Jews, Bulgars and all. We Rumanians have suffered enough in the past, and I'd make them all realise it."

Stireanu spoke with a quiet firmness which rather astonished Ivan Deane. "Malca, I beg of you not to talk like that. You speak without thinking. Just because we used to complain of the way the Russians treated us, we ought to be all the more careful now not to copy them and to ill-treat foreigners in our land...."

Malca shrugged her shoulders and interrupted her father by asking some new question about Vienna. "I can't even get as far as Bucarest," she grumbled.

"You know I promised to take you with me next time I went up to the Ministry," said Stireanu.

"And even if you do, what's Bucarest? It's a good deal better than Kishinev, but it's only got the Calea Victoriei, a couple of good restaurants which we can't afford to go to, a few dances of sorts, and then streets of little houses or cheap-looking, modern villas." She stopped short, and seemed to relent. "I'm sorry, Daddy," she said to her father, "but you know how it is. One can't help missing Paris. I don't mean everything I say."

Stireanu patted her hand affectionately. "No, I know you don't, my dear. I know that. I'm very sorry you miss the old life so much. I do myself, but I'm getting accustomed to it here. And after all, we've got great work, pioneer work, to do here. The whole future of our country depends on our ability to make our newly-won territories contented and prosperous. You'll get used to the life in time. You'll

marry some official and have children. Then you'll be all right."

She muttered something in Rumanian about officials which Deane imagined was very uncomplimentary.

"You'll get used to things here in time," repeated Stireanu soothingly.

Would she, Deane wondered? And the more he wondered the more he doubted it. As an outsider, he could understand father and daughter, and could sympathise with them both. He watched Malca when her father was not looking, and he realised that, having youth on her side, she would probably have her own way in the end.

The Stireanu's house was very small and one of its rooms they had been compelled to let, for the housing shortage had led to very strict regulations against unoccupied apartments. In fact, when he was taken to the bedroom that was to be his for the night, Deane realised that Malca had given up her own room to him. He protested very strongly and wanted to move to the one hotel of the place, but they both refused to listen to the suggestion.

"A Rumanian would never allow his friend to stay in an hotel," declared Stireanu proudly.

"Besides, Daddy knew how glad I should be to see you," added Malca. "I shall be quite all right, as we've a sort of box-room where I can sleep."

"Well, let me go there," urged Deane. "Please do."

But Malca laughed mischievously, and refused. "Fine gentlemen from Western Europe can't sleep where Rumanians can. You forget that once you come east of Vienna you are in the Orient." She caught hold of him by the hand and led him into the other living room. "Come and look at my Bessa-

rabian carpets and embroideries, and see how much we Rumanians have learnt from those other Orientals, the Turks and the Persians."

She showed him beautiful, old Bessarabian rugs such as he had never seen before, while Stireanu hovered about in the background, rubbing his hands together with joy that the conversation had turned on a subject which reflected so much credit on his country. There were peasant girls' skirts with heavy pleats and complicated patterns worked out in minute silver disks, bridal veils of beautiful embroidery on long strips of raw silk, blouses, carpets, shoes—all the work of unlettered peasants and all showing an artistic blending of colour and design which made Deane feel ashamed of his much-vaunted Western civilisation. Stireanu caressed the materials, emphasised their qualities, explained how the vegetable dyes were made, became romantic about the tragedies that were woven into these carpets, made in humble cottages under the rule of the Russian or the Turk, and was thoroughly happy. The happier he became, the more Malca's enthusiasm for the work of her countrywomen died down. She became listless and bored, and her thoughts wandered.

"Poor Daddy," she said to Deane when Stireanu went out of the room to fetch some treasure or other, "he is so keen about it all, isn't he?"

"Well, there's something to be keen about," commented Deane.

She glared at him. "If you knew how I hate it all! What do I care about all these things?"—she waved her arm towards the rugs that hung on the white-washed walls—"I want to live, and you can't live here. You only stagnate."

"It must be awfully dull for anyone like you," agreed Deane, "but it will come all right in the end.

I mean, your father may leave, or you may get used to it."

"You, too, talk like that?" There was infinite contempt in her voice. "I thought you'd understand. Daddy will never leave his beloved Bessarabia and I will never stay."

Deane hedged. "Of course I understand. And sympathise. But what are you going to do?"

"I'll find *someone* to take me away, sooner or later. And if I don't, I'll go without. I *won't* stay, I tell you." She stamped her foot. Then she caught hold of his arm again and was all apologies. "I've got no right to talk to you like that. You've been awfully nice and sympathetic, and I ought not to trade on it. Besides, I'm only a girl, and what happens to me doesn't matter to you one way or another." She stood very close to Deane and stared up at him in an alluring, pathetic way that rather embarrassed him.

"I'm very glad if you talk to me like that," he assured her, "and I wish I could help. I haven't been nice and sympathetic, and of course it matters to me what happens to you. It matters very much." He put his arm round her shoulder as though to protect her—against what he did not know and did not take the trouble to ask himself. It was a pleasant feeling to have her so close to him, and she seemed to like it too, so that was all that mattered.

He felt that it was just as well that Stireanu returned when he did. But at the same time he felt a little annoyed with him for doing so.

II

They had talked until far into the night about Paris, Bessarabia and foreign politics. In his room

Deane undressed slowly, for he was wondering to himself what life must be like in this remote Eastern European village. Suddenly there came a gentle knock at his door. He slipped on his dressing-gown and called "Come in." Instead of Stireanu, Malca appeared. She wore a silk wrap and her hair hung loose over her shoulders—for the inhabitants of Bessarabia had not yet learnt the art of "bobbing" and "shingling." "I'm very sorry to disturb you," she said, "but I had forgotten my hairbrush."

He went to fetch it from the dressing-table, but she came into the room and closed the door behind her. "May I talk for a few minutes? I don't want Daddy to hear." She went across to a divan covered with rugs and signed to him to come and sit beside her.

Deane was not sure what he ought to do. "Wouldn't it be better if we talked to-morrow? I mean, it is getting rather late."

"Of course, if you're too sleepy to talk to me . . ."

"No, you know I don't mean that. It's only—er—suppose anyone knew you were here, it would look rather bad, wouldn't it? People will think absurd things, won't they?"

"Absurd?"

"Oh, well, you know what I mean." He went over and sat down on the extreme edge of the divan. She seemed amused by his embarrassment, but he did not think there was much to laugh about. Damn it all, she looked very attractive in that silken thing, with her hair all over the place. Deuced awkward if her father heard her. No use explaining. His denials would not be believed. She was confoundedly pretty. After all, one might just as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. . . .

But the thought of her father sobered him. Plucky

little devil, Stireanu! There was something rather fine in his obstinacy. According to the Mayor, he had refused quite alluring offers from the Government to do propaganda work of one sort or another abroad, for he had felt he could be more useful to his country here. So here he plodded on, with his school and his journalism, his apiary and his vineyard, giving up all the little comforts and pleasures to which he must have become attached in Paris. It was quite clear that he had met with disappointment after disappointment, as he found that first one colleague and then another was not inspired by that fervent devotion to his country which inspired him. And it was pretty bad luck on him that the one person whom he loved, his daughter, could not share his enthusiasm.

Bad luck on her, too, Deane thought, as he watched her sitting beside him. She was certainly far too pretty to be left here all her life. He felt frightened for them both, for he did not see how the contentment of the one was possible except at the expense of the contentment of the other.

Malca put her hand on his, but he pretended not to notice it. "What I wanted to talk to you about," she began, "was the possibility of getting away from here. I thought you might be able to help me."

"I? But what could I do? Besides, there's your father. What does he think about it?"

"He doesn't know, of course. He mustn't know until everything is decided, because he'd do everything to stop my going. It's no good for you to look at me like that," she went on. "I know he'll find it hard. But what can I do? *I* have a right to live, too, and I'm not living here. Do you think it's fair to me to tie me down here for the rest of my life?"

He looked at her as she sat there with her hair in

disorder, her eyes flashing, and her silken wrap covering her perhaps a little less than it should have done. "No," he agreed. "I confess that I don't. But what are you going to do? How can I help?"

"I don't know," she admitted.

"Do you want to get work? What sort of job would you look for? I might be able to do something if you are a good shorthand-typist?"

"But I'm not. I hadn't worried much about what I was going to do. Only I must get away." She was pensive for a while, and then she suddenly jumped to her feet. "I know. I can dance."

And dance she did. Ivan Deane wondered whether she was exceptionally innocent, or whether she was deliberately trying to excite him. She had come, without very many clothes on, well after midnight, to his bedroom, and was now dancing before him. She must, he decided, be provoking him intentionally, and he, therefore, determined not to be provoked. Besides, he was not vain enough to believe that she had fallen in love with his *beaux yeux*. She must have some motive. So he watched her coolly and complimented her when she had finished. "But it would be difficult to earn your living by dancing," he pointed out. "It must be a very precarious sort of job."

She agreed sadly, but insisted that he must help her. She snuggled up close to him, and then asked him: "Wouldn't you like to take me with you? We could meet in Bucarest and go on together, wherever you liked. It wouldn't matter to me as long as I got away from here with you." She spoke laughingly, but he felt convinced that she was deadly serious.

So this was what she was after! This was why she had come to see him so late at night. God, but she must be homesick for Paris and the bustle of a great

city! And poor old Stireanu, what would he say if he could hear their conversation?

Deane got up, a trifle brusquely, and pretended to yawn. "Yes, wouldn't it be fun," he laughed back. "It's a pity so many attractive things are impossible. And now, don't you think it's about time we went to bed? It's just on two o'clock?"

Malca rose to her feet. She knew that he, too, despite his laughter, was deadly serious. "Well, I suppose you're right," she said as she picked up her hairbrush and moved towards the door. She hid her feelings, whatever they were, very successfully, but as she stood on the threshold she turned towards him. "They are right," she declared, "those people who talk about cold-blooded Englishmen."

"Well," thought Deane to himself as he hunted in his suitcase for his pyjamas, "I wonder if I'm a fool. I suppose I am." He turned out the light, and stared through the shutters at the moonlit street of Drăneşti with the old fortress guarding the passage of the Dniester in the distance. "Poor, little Stireanu!" he muttered, as he climbed into bed.

III

Deane was standing on a platform of Bucarest station, trying vainly to explain to three unshaven, fierce-looking men with tall sheepskin caps what he wanted done with his luggage, when Cozma Stireanu rushed up and clasped both his hands. For the first moment Deane scarcely recognised him, since he looked so much older and his hair had turned quite grey. "Yes, I don't look as young as I did," said Stireanu, noticing his look of astonishment, "although it was only just a year ago when you were in Bes-

sarabia. But I've had a pretty worrying time since then."

He gave brusque orders which brought peace between the three unshaven porters and accompanied Deane to a rather decrepit cab. "How long are you going to be here?" he asked. "What are you doing this evening?"

Deane explained that he expected to be in Bucarest only a couple of days—just long enough to find out the "story" behind a rumoured political crisis. "I telegraphed to Dickinson, of the Royal Dutch Petroleum crowd, that I was coming and told him I would meet him for dinner. Can you lunch with me to-morrow?"

Stireanu looked crestfallen. "I'm going back at midnight," he explained. "I only came up yesterday to see the Minister before he left for Paris. I've just been to see him off. I'm very sorry, as I should love to have a long talk, but I've got too much to do in Bessarabia to miss the night train."

He was so obviously distressed that Deane decided to ring up Dickinson to put him off. "Let's just go along to the Athenée Palace," he said, "to make sure they've reserved my room all right, and then I'll explain matters to Dickinson. He won't mind. I can see him to-morrow."

So they rattled past the odd jumble of little jim-crack hovels that reminded one of an Eastern bazaar, past the modern, American-looking apartment houses, and along the Calea Victoriei with its smart motor cars and shabby horse trams, to the one big hotel of Bucarest, the Athenée Palace. Dickinson was not drinking at the Athenée bar, so Deane rang up his office on the telephone and was fortunate enough to catch him in. He explained that he badly wanted to

talk to a Rumanian friend who was leaving for Bessarabia by the midnight train, and suggested that Dickinson should meet him on the morrow for a cocktail and a spot of lunch instead of dining with him to-night.

" Is she dark or fair ? " asked Dickinson.

" He's grey-haired," replied Deane, " and don't be an ass."

" Don't believe you," said Dickinson, " but I'll let you off."

" If you don't believe me, come to Capșa's and see for yourself. Cheerio."

Thus it came about that Deane dined at Capșa's with the little bright-eyed man who once had taught him distorted European history in an Institute in the Latin Quarter. As he had talked of Rumania then, so he talked of Rumania now, and his keenness had not diminished one atom. Even the restaurant served to encourage him, for it has as much history as any place in Bucarest. " It is more than a mere restaurant," he explained, " for it's still called the Little Parliament. Everyone comes to this little stuffy room. It's the political and social centre of Bucarest."

He insisted on choosing the dinner—*Borș Rusesc*, *Scrumbii de Dunăre*, *Sarmale de Varză*, *Plăcintă cumere*, with a bottle of Drăgășani wine to wash it down —and throughout the meal he talked of his difficulties and his achievements in Bessarabia. The *Vocea Basarabiei* had gone bankrupt, but he was writing for other and more important papers. In his school he was introducing the latest Western methods of education, rather to the distress of the authorities, who dared not dismiss him because of his reputation. It was not until they were drinking their Marghiloman coffee that Deane had a chance to ask after Malca.

His friend's face changed. It struck Deane that Stireanu had been talking so much partly with a view to postpone any reference to his daughter. There was a moment's silence and then the Rumanian smiled a little unconvincingly. "Oh, of course, you haven't heard about her. Malca left eight or nine months ago. It was dull for her at Drăneşti, and in the end she went abroad."

"Really! Must make you feel a bit lonely, though?"

"I have my work. That keeps me busy."

"Where is she? I wonder if I shall ever run across her."

Stireanu hesitated quite perceptibly before he replied. "She moves about a good deal, but now she's in Berlin."

"A good job, I hope," said Deane, partly for politeness and partly because he was genuinely curious.

"Quite. I think she's very happy. She doesn't write very often, but I believe she's doing some secretarial work."

"I'm very glad. Perhaps you can let me have her address. I'd like to look her up and pay my compliments. I expect I shall be in Berlin in a week or two."

Stireanu looked quite flustered. "Of course, of course," he said. "I haven't got it with me here, but I can send it from Bessarabia. The only trouble is that I think she's on the point of leaving Berlin and going to—er—to Stockholm. Yes. Stockholm. I must send you her address all the same."

The little man seemed so uncomfortable that Deane thought it advisable to change the subject. He asked some general question about the actual strength of the Liberal Party, and his friend gave him, as usual, a reasoned and interesting reply. But the zest had

gone out of their conversation. There was some secret that Deane did not know, and its existence made them both feel uneasy. Indeed, Deane was quite pleased to see Dickinson and Felton, an engineer from the oilfields at Campina, making their way across the restaurant towards him.

"We haven't come to feed," explained Dickinson, "but only to settle a bet. I backed you, and for once I'm right. Felton wouldn't believe you weren't with a girl, and he's lost two hundred *lei* because of his lack of confidence in your sobriety. We're now going off to convert a certain amount of paper money into bad champagne, and if you feel like trying your hand at alchemy of this sort you'll find us at the *Corso Cabaret*."

Deane introduced Stireanu to them. "What, Cozma Stireanu of Bessarabia?" asked Dickinson. "I'm delighted. I've no great love for your Government—nobody who has to look after concessions granted to a foreign firm has—but I've met a lot of admirable patriots. And I've heard so much about you that I'm surprised to see you dining with a scoundrel like Deane. You must have rubbed a few people up the wrong way because you are too keen on your work. You probably have nearly as many enemies as admirers, and I'm proud to be one of the latter."

Stireanu bowed modestly, and wondered whether he ought to deny the alleged rascality of Ivan Deane. The worst of these Englishmen was that you never knew when they were serious.

"Well, we won't interrupt," went on Dickinson. "But you'll know where we are if you feel like a drink after M. Stireanu has left. I hardly expected to win my bet, Deane—you must be getting old. The fact,

M. Stireanu, that you should be seen in public with a journalist, and a journalist of Deane's character, is an impressive example of your courage." With Felton in tow, he wandered across the room to drink a glass of *Tşuica* with a Secretary of the French Legation and the Spanish Military Attaché, and left Deane and Stireanu to their coffee.

Stireanu was silent for some time. Deane made some sort of apology for Dickinson's levity, but his companion seemed not to hear him. He was obviously trying to reach some decision, and Deane began to wish that the train left at ten o'clock instead of at midnight.

But his feeling of boredom left him entirely when Stireanu leant across the table and began to talk about Malca.

"I can trust you as an old friend, and you travel such a lot and meet so many people," began the Rumanian. "That is why I would like to tell you something I have never told any of my colleagues in Bessarabia. You won't be bored by a personal story?" He stared anxiously at Deane, and his little, tapering fingers played nervously with his coffee spoon.

"Of course not," said Deane, "and if I can help in any way I should be delighted. But if you'd rather not talk, please don't. I mean, I don't want to seem indiscreet."

"No, I'd much rather tell you. I want to tell someone, and there's always a chance that you might meet Malca. You travel such a lot. It was your friend's reference to a Cabaret that decided me."

"But why a Cabaret? I don't see the connection."

"I'll explain. I must begin from the beginning, which was a couple of months after your visit to Bessarabia. Malca said nothing to me, but she must

have been very unhappy. I was selfish and so taken up with my work that I didn't think. She . . ."

"She ran away?" suggested Deane, thinking to help his friend, but Stireanu became more agitated than ever.

"You knew?" he asked. "How did you guess? Was it so very clear to everyone except myself?"

Deane consoled him as best he could, and Stireanu went on with his story. "Yes, she ran away, and with a good-for-nothing, an official called Petrescu. She left me a letter to explain, but she wouldn't come back. I followed them to Vienna and saw her, but, you see, I couldn't give up all my work in Bessarabia. I was angry with her, and harder than I ought to have been. But it was Petrescu's fault. I couldn't forgive him about the money."

"What money?"

"Hadn't I told you? No, of course not. I'm getting all muddled. You must forgive me. Petrescu was a young official who'd been sent up from the south. He hated Bessarabia from the beginning, and he could not understand us Moldavians—people from Walachia are very unlike us, you know. He used to encourage Malca, to feed her discontent by running the place down. When he left with her, he took away a lot of money with him. That was why I couldn't tell anyone the truth about Malca. I could not say she'd run away with a thief.

"Of course, he ought never to have been in the Government service at all, for he was lazy, and incompetent into the bargain. But what would you? Our population and our territory have been more than doubled by the Peace Treaties, and we've been left almost bankrupt by the war and by the long enemy occupation. So our officials are badly paid and fellows

like Petrescu make the most of the chaotic situation by filling their own pockets."

"Is he still with her?" asked Deane, anxious to bring his friend back to his story.

"Oh, no. They quarrelled, I believe. Anyhow he's back in Rumania."

"But the money he stole?"

"I paid that back. Nobody knows about it except Petrescu and yourself."

"You paid? But what on earth for?"

Stireanu seemed to seek for excuse for his generosity. "The fellow was young, and I thought he might make good," he explained. "Besides, there have been so many scandals of this kind that are used against us by our enemies. And then I feared that if he was arrested, it would all come out about Malca. All my colleagues think she had work in Berlin."

Deane nodded his head sympathetically. "Was it much?" he asked.

"Quite a lot. But I don't need the whole house, now that I'm alone. I have a couple of rooms and I've let the rest, and I've sold the vineyard."

"But, damn it all, you oughtn't to do things like that. One more scandal wouldn't hurt your country as much as all that."

"There were features about this one that were bad. The money came from the very poor. Besides, I'm a vain man—" Deane laughed incredulously—"and I couldn't stand the shame of people knowing my Malca had run away with a thief. He offered to marry her, I'll say that much for him. Indeed, he wanted to, I believe, but she wouldn't. I hardly believe she ever cared for him very much. But she wanted to get away from Drăneşti. It's all my fault because I never thought enough about her when we

were together. I took it for granted that, because I loved my work, she'd love it too."

"But what happened when you saw them in Vienna?"

"It was my fault, too. I was hard, and I wouldn't understand. She said things about Bessarabia which hurt me. And I was very angry. I had never thought that my only daughter could act like that. To run away with a wastrel like Petrescu! No, I was angry, and I ordered her to come back with me. She wouldn't. She said she'd never dream of it, and she asked if I would leave all my work in Bessarabia and go back to Paris."

"What was I to do? You see, I've given up the best part of my life to this idea of seeing Bessarabia as a flourishing Rumanian province. If I hadn't been so angry, it might have been different. But I spoke harshly. I lost my chance. I ordered her to come back, and she was in no mood to take orders."

"And now?"

"Now I don't know where she is. She's proud and she would not let me send her any money—that's one of the reasons she gives me no address, I believe. We quarrelled in their hotel in Vienna, and I left in a rage, and when I went back next day they had gone. You see, during the night I had time to think it over, and I began to realise how selfish I had been. She always loved the movement, colour, noise of a big city, and she had never known her own country as a child. I was born in Bessarabia, and my parents taught me its history, so that I became proud, as a schoolboy, of not being able to understand properly what my masters said to me in Russian. If they grew impatient and angry—as very naturally they did—I used to look upon myself as a martyr. You Englishmen don't under-

stand that sort of sentiment, for you have no need of it, but you'll find it all over Eastern Europe. I had that background, you see, and poor Malca had nothing of it. She couldn't be expected to enter into my work."

"You know what happened after they left Vienna?"

"Yes, Petrescu told me. He explained about the stolen money as an excuse for refusing to come back to Bessarabia. I said I would put that straight for him, but they did not return, as I'd hoped they might. Some weeks later I had a letter from him from Dresden, saying that Malca had left him and asking if he could come back, or if people knew about his theft. He soon tired of adventure when he had spent his money—the money of the Bessarabian peasants—and found he would have to work for his living in a foreign country. So he came back, and he's in business of some sort in Bucarest. I never meet him, for I haven't much self-control. Sometimes I feel I shall wring his neck for taking away my daughter, and at others I ask myself what would be the good of it. We're not much more than leaves blown along the autumn roads by the wind. Petrescu is not to blame."

Stireanu was silent for a long time. Deane muttered a few words of consolation. He had ceased to wonder why his Rumanian friend had aged so much. If Bessarabia had been depressing for Malca, what must it be for this little man, alone night after night in the two rooms that were now his home, asking himself how much he was to blame for his daughter's desertion?

At length Stireanu took up the thread of his story again. "I heard from her once, from Berlin three months ago. I would like you to see her letter." He took out his shabby pocket case, bulging with newspaper clippings about Bessarabia, and found her note.

"But I can't read it," Deane pointed out. "I don't know enough Rumanian."

"Of course, how stupid of me. I forget that, although you are a friend, you are also a foreigner. I will translate it to you."

Malca seemed to have had time to think things over. She professed to be happy, but there was, Deane felt, a touch of wistfulness about her letter which was probably not all due to her regret at having left her father all alone. She had not been able to put up with a vulgar creature like Petrescu any longer, she explained, and she could not understand how she had ever had anything to do with him. Probably, Deane thought, the young man, who had seemed a model of elegance and good breeding in Drăneşti, had been less impressive in Vienna, Munich and Dresden. Since leaving Dresden she had found work as a dancer in Berlin. During the day she gave a few lessons and at night she had an engagement in "a little theatre."

Stireanu seemed to be quite proud of the "little theatre." "She'll make her way all right," he said. "Her talent was all wasted in Bessarabia." But Deane had had more experience of after-war Europe than his guest, and he feared Malca's "little theatre" could only be one of Berlin's thousand cabarets. He showed an optimism that he was far from feeling.

"I'm glad she's getting on all right," he said. "Have you written to her?"

"There is no address on her letter," confessed Stireanu. "It's that which worries me. She's proud, and she may be afraid I should try again to make her come home, or send her money. It's all my fault because I was so angry in Vienna. I told her I never wanted to see her again and that she had disgraced our name. I was so upset when she refused to

return that I hardly knew what I was saying. If I had not been so selfish in the beginning the whole thing would never have happened. But when people compliment me on my work now, it hurts. It's the work that was to blame."

"I shall be in Berlin again in a week or two," interrupted Deane, to cheer his companion up. "The world's pretty small, and we might meet. One never knows."

"It's just possible," agreed Stireanu. He rose to go, for midnight was approaching. Deane drove with him to the station and saw him into his train. "It's more than possible," said Stireanu. "It's quite probable. After all, who would ever have expected to meet you in Drăneşti? It's a pity Malca gave so few details of her work."

Probably just as well, thought Deane, grimly to himself.

"I'll do everything I can to find her, and, if I do, I'll tell her how you feel. She'll come back."

"Or I could go to live in Paris again," said Stireanu. He thought this over for a minute or two, and then contradicted himself. "No. No, that wouldn't be true. Is it that I'm selfish? It's somehow all my life, this work in Bessarabia. It's less personal perhaps than my love for Malca, but it's bigger. No. I've *got* to stay here, whatever happens, and all I can hope for is that Malca will change, will grow tired of cities."

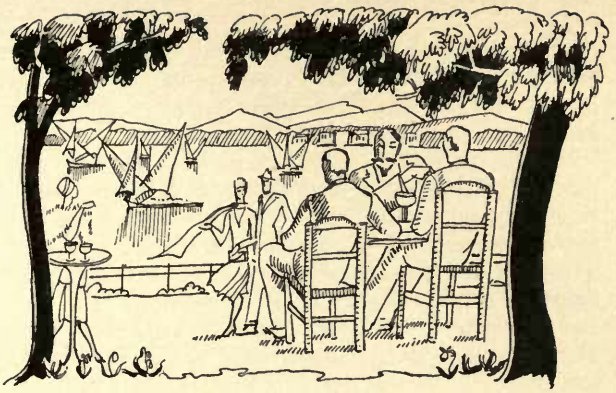
The train jolted its slow way out of the station, and Deane walked a few yards by it. Stireanu leant out of the window. "A thousand thanks," he said. "You can't know what a difference you've made. I had rather lost courage of late. One's work isn't always easy. Now I'll be able to begin again."

"And I'll hunt through the whole of Berlin," called

Deane. He stood and watched the light of the receding train until it faded to nothing on its way to the steppes of Bessarabia. Then he went to his cab. "*Corso Cabaret*," he ordered. But when they reached the cabaret he decided he would not go in. Instead, he wandered back on foot to the Athenée Palace. He thought of Malca, in her silken wrap, with her hair loose over her shoulders, and of her queer, little father, with his fanatical devotion to his beloved Bessarabia. The one probably forced to dance in some wretched, glaring place in Berlin; the other waiting, hopefully, for news of her, working in his whitewashed rooms on the banks of the Dniester.

Deane muttered a comment which was not very original. "It's a damned funny world," he stated.

The Hôtel National



The Hôtel National

A distinguished-looking person, who so closely resembled the picture-palace idea of an ambassador that any man of the world must have recognised him as a head waiter, came across the restaurant and bowed respectfully. "*Son Altesse prendra le café dans le jardin?*" he asked.

Prince Alexander Sobelinski looked inquiringly at his two guests. Baron Ludwig von Bielerstein was the first to speak. "What about your usual table, under the Judas tree?"

"The very place," said Count Paul Rezanov.

Sobelinski ordered cigars and a fine old cognac which was too rare to be mentioned in the hotel's wine list. "The dinner," he added, "was not too bad."

The head waiter bowed low and murmured his thanks for this praise. "*Je soignerai aussi pour le café*," he assured the Prince as he ushered the three men through the garden to the table under the Judas

tree. He called for glasses shaped specially to hold the *bouquet* and, with much ceremony, poured out the brandy himself while two other waiters stood behind him, like reverent acolytes.

The night was so still that Bielerstein could blow one smoke ring through the other. He soon tired of this occupation, and sipped his cognac, letting it lie for a moment on his tongue before he swallowed. Then he nodded appreciatively. "There are worse drinks in the world than this," he commented.

"And there are worse places in the world than Geneva," said Prince Alexander, as he stared across the lake.

Count Rezanov said nothing, but glared gloomily through the plane trees at the lights of Geneva, crowned by the spire of the cathedral and the clustering buildings of the Old Town. He had no eyes for the lovers drifting in rowing boats on the moonlit water or for the complacent Genevese who wandered along the Quai du Mont Blanc, just in front of the hotel garden, like "supers" in a musical comedy.

"What's the matter, Paul?" asked Bielerstein at length. "*Was hast Du denn heute Abend?*" The three had studied together at Jena, and had never dropped the habit of using the second person singular to each other.

"Thinking," said Rezanov shortly.

Bielerstein made the usual facetious and insulting comments.

"What about?" asked Sobelinski.

"Geneva."

There was a pause, and then Rezanov burst out: "It's all façade. They can't be real—this damned lake, and the Salève behind it, and the neat trees on the quay. It's all too much like a drop scene in a

theatre. There must be something behind it all. Something sinister. It's too blue and tidy and perfect. I distrust it and hate it."

"Indigestion, old boy," declared Bielerstein.

"And I chose the dinner! Neither of you very polite to your host, are you?" laughed Sobelinski. "But why this mood, Paul? Here we are, in June, 1914, in one of the most sober and respectable cities in Europe, and you find sinister romance in it!"

"It's only that I've been thinking about the other Russians here. The ones who live here, you know. We don't count. We only live on the surface of things. To us Geneva seems a pleasant holiday resort for wealthy Russians. But I tell you, you're wrong. It's the home of revolution and anarchy, and it will end up by destroying the Russia we look on as ours."

Bielerstein, as a German, merely laughed at his friend's Slavonic pessimism. "I was right—indigestion," he declared. But Rezanov was silent for so long that he feared he must have offended him. He leant across and patted him on the back. "No offence meant, you know."

"The trouble with you both," began Rezanov, "is that you've no imagination. I've been wandering around the Carouge quarter this afternoon. . . ."

"Never heard of it," interrupted his host.

"Of course not. Ever heard of Vladimir Ulianov?"

"Never."

"Well, I happened on the Rue des Maraichers, where he used to live. In the old days, when I was younger, and therefore more generous and curious than I am now, I used to play with the idea of being another Tolstoi, and I drifted round to a lot of Socialist meetings. . . ."

"I remember," interrupted Sobelinski again. "I nearly caught the disease myself. Only I hadn't the brains, and then there was that girl from the Opera—Vera—whatever her name was. She kept me too busy just then."

"I came to Geneva—it must have been in 1908 or thereabouts—and met most of the revolutionaries who used to live in the Carouge. They're still there, for that matter. Or at least I saw a lot of Russians this afternoon who were so shabby and intellectual that they could only be anarchists or professors, and they can't all be professors."

"Who's Vladimir Ulianov?" asked Sobelinski.

"I only mentioned him because I happened to hear him speak once or twice at the *Maison du Peuple*. An unpleasant little fellow, with a broad, Oriental face and a cynical smile. But devilishly impressive, anyhow. Clever as they make them, and so sincere as to be absolutely ruthless. He once ran a revolutionary paper in Paris, and most of the Russians living abroad know him or know of him."

"I don't," said Sobelinski.

"No, but I meant the Russian exiles. The fellows who can't go back because of Siberia. Vladimir Ulianov spent some of his own life there, I believe, and he's not the sort of fellow to forget and forgive."

"Proper place for revolutionaries," put in Bielerstein. "You Russians blow hot and cold. You're too harsh or not nearly harsh enough. Too much agriculture and not enough industry. Machinery makes them wage slaves instead of serfs, and much easier to keep in order. One doesn't get so sentimental about an artisan as about a shepherd."

"You can't treat a Russian like you can a German,"

declared Rezanov. "Vladimir Ulianov and his kind are dangerous enough as it is, but once Russia becomes industrialised, God help everyone."

"Damn your Vladimir Ulianov, anyway," said Prince Alexander Sobelinski. "He'll spoil my cognac. Besides, these fellows don't matter. They had all the stuffing knocked out of them in 1905."

Light after light was switched out on the little tables in the garden of the Hôtel National. Sobelinski and Bielerstein argued about wine, women and Monte Carlo, while Rezanov watched the faint form of Mont Blanc and wondered about his own country and the power that a man like Vladimir Ulianov might wield if once he could get hold of the peasants. He could not forget the man's sharp, black eyes, his sardonic laughter, his iron determination.

It was very late when the three rose to go into the hotel, but the head waiter and his two acolytes appeared from nowhere, ushered the distinguished visitors across the half-darkened restaurant and placed them in the care of an obsequious night porter and of a less respectful lift boy, who was still too young and inexperienced to know the financial importance of distinguishing between one guest and another.

Baron Ludwig von Bielerstein was killed, during the battle of Tannenberg, in an attack against Prince Alexander Sobelinski's division. Vladimir Ulianov, better known as Lenin, went back from Switzerland to Russia to overthrow Kerenski and his rather colourless colleagues. One of these colleagues was Count Paul Rezanov, who became for a time one of the hundreds of refugee taxi-drivers in Paris, but who now earns a comfortable livelihood as *régisseur* of a Russian cabaret near the Boulevard Montparnasse.

Doña Maria announced at lunch time that they must leave Marseilles on September 30th. That gave them six more weeks in Europe, so that there was no time to be lost. They would have to leave Aix-les-Bains in a day or two, as Juanita would want a week or two in Paris before her marriage to the Prince, and he would probably want to run over to London to see about clothes to take out to the Argentine.

Prince Alexander Sobelinski tried to look pleased, but he only looked acquiescent. He was fond enough of Juanita, despite her mannerisms and the humiliation of having to ask her for whatever money he needed. She was generous enough—these South American cattle people could well afford to be—but every time she gave him a bundle of notes he felt a little more tied to this new country he already disliked, although he had never seen it, and a little more out of touch with this Europe that he loved, although he could not understand what was happening to it since the war. His fiancée talked too much of galloping across the open pampas, and he hated galloping only less than he hated trotting. Horses were all right at Longchamps, Auteuil, Ascot or Goodwood, but he had seen more than enough of them at close quarters in the army. Juanita argued that there were magnificent cities in South America—cleaner, more spacious and more luxurious than these untidy European capitals—but he retaliated by pointing out that it was passing strange so many South Americans should spend so much of their time in Europe.

But he could see no alternative. He was used to a measure of comfort, without which he felt miserable and to which he could never attain by his own efforts. In the nineteenth century women had been brought up only to marry; they were quite unable to fend for

themselves. In his youth he had learnt nothing that had a value in gold and silver, and now he found himself in the same difficulties as a girl of the Victorian age. He must either live in misery or make a good marriage. Juanita wanted his title, but she wanted it in her own country, to overwhelm her own friends. There were too many princesses for her in Europe.

Once they were married and had lived a few months in the New World she would probably be only too glad to return to the Old one. But only if her mother let her. Alexander was frightened of his future mother-in-law, and he felt that she would compel Juanita to stay in Rosario. She was growing old and captious, she disliked Europe, which, she declared, was breaking up, and she liked being surrounded by her family. No, on the whole, Alexander feared he would see very little of his beloved Europe in the next few years. Only six weeks more! And only three or four before his marriage! What a fool he had been not to study something useful at Jena, so that he could earn his own living if it came to a pinch.

"What's the matter, Alexi?" asked Juanita across the dinner table. "You seem very worried."

"Thinking," he replied shortly, and as he did so he was suddenly taken back eleven years. He remembered Bielerstein—poor old Bielerstein!—asking Rezanov a similar question and getting a similar reply in the garden of that hotel in Geneva, years and years ago. What was its name? All the names were so alike. Ah, the National. Yes, that was it—the National.

As soon as they had had coffee he made some excuse and went off to his room. He placed himself on his balcony, overlooking the town and the lake and continued his rather unusual occupation of thinking. In his imagination he saw innumerable South American

cities, all glaringly white, all with dusty palms, all built in blocks and squares. He was accustomed to spend days doing nothing, but he doubted whether he could ever grow accustomed to doing nothing in an Argentine café. Besides, he was a snob, with a great contempt for people whose families had not been distinguished for at least a couple of centuries. A person's brains or capabilities mattered to him very little, his wealth was more important, but his pedigree was most important of all, and he feared that in the New World the less one inquired into pedigrees the better it would be.

Prince Alexander Sobelinski stretched out his long legs and stared at the neat crease in his trousers. When he was worried he could generally regain his equanimity by studying the cut of his clothes or the elegance of his boots—an occupation which gave him the satisfactions of the philosopher without the preliminary boredom of acquiring learning from ponderous volumes. But to-day he remained discontented, although the crease was all that it should be. For the first time in his life he felt the stirrings within him of a revolutionary spirit.

Why, he asked himself, should he give himself a dictatorial mother-in-law? He wanted money, but he also wanted peace and freedom. Ten years ago he would never have dreamed for a moment of earning his own living, but now he was very tempted to try. After all, other people—and by "people" he meant his social equals—had done it, and nobody despised them for it. There was no reason why he should not do so too. Or only one reason—that he did not know if he could manage it. He knew several languages, of course, but then so did lots of other people, and he did not know anything about more

severely practical things such as book-keeping or typing or doing business with Jews.

The Hôtel National in Geneva kept bobbing up in his mind. Now, *there* was a job for him. He would not mind running a place like that. Other Society people ran hotels, and the National was not an hotel to be ashamed of. But one would have to be polite to some very terrible people, like those people at the next table in the restaurant downstairs the other day—Doña Maria had insisted on having their table changed. And he supposed a manager had to arrange about the food and all that sort of thing. Besides, perhaps they would not want him as manager there.

He was roused by the house telephone. Juanita wanted to know if he would be ready in five minutes to motor over to tea on the Lac d'Annecy. These South Americans were so brusque. Why, his nails alone would need five minutes of attention. He compromised on a quarter of an hour.

They had tea in the old Abbey garden at Talloires and then drove along by the edge of one of the most beautiful lakes in Europe. But Alexander noticed very little about the scenery, for he was still thinking. From time to time the future Princess stared up at him, from under her long and artificially-black lashes, with anxious wonderment.

"Would you mind if I went over to Geneva for the day?" he asked Doña Maria next morning. "I've got some business over there. There's someone I want to see."

"I can take you in my two-seater," suggested Juanita.

"I'm sorry, but I think I ought to go alone. I should probably keep you waiting about a long time."

"Oh, all right." Juanita tossed her head.

"You can have the Daimler," said Doña Maria, "as we shall only want the one car."

He lunched quietly at Annecy and then drove on to Geneva. He would make one attempt to retain his freedom. If there was one place more than another where they should be willing to offer him work, it was the Hôtel National in Geneva. He had been one of the hotel's most regular visitors before the war, and, even if they did not want an assistant manager—he was growing rather frightened of the responsibilities of management—they might want someone to look after the foreign visitors. Geneva was always crowded with foreigners and he had a vague idea that the League of Nations, whatever else it did, would probably attract a number of delegates from strange countries, so that the hotel might be very glad of his help. He would not mind much what salary they offered him. This was the test case. If old Piovelli, who used to be manager, would take him on as assistant, he would break off his engagement and rough it. If Piovelli could offer him nothing, then he would say nothing more, do nothing more about it, but would marry Juanita—mother-in-law, pampas, the glaring cities of the Argentine and all. The test case—he had never been so excited about anything before.

"The place must be doing pretty well," he thought to himself when the car drew up at the hotel door, for there were dozens of other motor cars parked just outside. But the man who opened the door was not in proper uniform. "I shall alter that if they make me joint manager," commented Alexander.

The old concierge was no longer at his desk. Instead, were two men he had never seen before. Nobody took any notice of him—a further proof of bad

management—so perhaps he had better stroll around a bit in the hope of meeting Piovelli. He could then approach the subject matter of his visit by roundabout methods far more likely to succeed than a direct request for a job.

The entrance hall was crowded, but Prince Alexander was disappointed by the people. Of course, it was the same thing everywhere—he recollected the people in his hotel at Aix-les-Bains—but there were stranger-looking people here than he had expected. And they had funny habits, too. Some very neatly-dressed girls went up and down the staircase, but they were in such unlady-like haste. In his view, a girl might be in a hurry if she carried a tennis racket, but not a bundle of documents. Indeed, girls should not carry documents at all. There was an old gentleman with long, grey hair, a torn water-proof coat and an untidy bundle of papers. There were people talking every sort of language and there were people of every colour, but they all looked strangely busy and preoccupied.

While Prince Alexander Sobelinski watched these visitors with interest mingled with astonishment, two people near him made way for a man whom they greeted as "*Monsieur le Président.*" His big head, humorous eyes, untidy hair, hunched shoulders and slim figure seemed oddly familiar, and Prince Alexander asked someone who he was. "That? Why, that's Briand," was the reply.

Briand, of course! Then that helped to explain some of these people who were standing around. They might be journalists or politicians. Alexander began to understand. The Assembly, or whatever they called it, of the League of Nations was in session and presumably all the hotels were filled with dele-

gates. Near the staircase, for example, was a black gentleman with a black cape, tight white trousers, curly hair and an ordinary felt hat—what could he be but an African delegate of some sort? And this tall man with white, bushy hair and moustache and with an immense brim to his hat—a brim, Alexander felt, such as people would expect him to have when he galloped across the pampas—surely it was Nansen, the explorer? He asked his next-door neighbour and was told he had guessed rightly. Alexander distrusted premiers, who were upstarts and, he imagined, dishonest, and distrusted Nansen, who had been in touch with the Bolsheviks, but he realised that such people might be useful attractions from the point of view of the hotel business, and his spirits rose.

He wandered across to the old reading-room. A man opened the door for him and he walked in. But, instead of the quiet, restful place he remembered, he found a large horseshoe table with some fifty people sitting around it, a row of men making notes at a desk, and a score or so of men and women sitting like attentive children in a school round the sides of the room. An excitable gentleman with a beard, a large stomach, and an atrocious extra-European accent, was making a speech to state that "*dans l'intérêt de la paix générale*," his "*gouvernemang*" was prepared to sign the convention. As Prince Alexander moved towards the door he stumbled over somebody's feet, and a number of delegates turned on him with scowls and frowns.

"The impertinence of them!" he thought to himself when he got outside. "Here they come and hold their wretched conferences in the hotel itself and then glare at me if I make a sound. *Me*, indeed!" There did not seem to be much chance of finding Piovelli here, for Piovelli must have left. He would never,

Alexander felt sure, have allowed this sort of thing to happen in any hotel he was managing.

He peeped into one more room, but left it in mystified haste. In it were several men and women writing telegrams, typewriting or reading papers pinned up on boards round the walls. This was obviously one of the hotel writing-rooms, but in Piovelli's day visitors would not have made concentration on such matters as the soothing of one's tailor impossible by bringing their portable typewriters with them. No visitor, in fact, would have confessed to a knowledge of the working of such machines.

So, if Piovelli had gone, the only thing to do was to see his successor without further delay. He made his way through the crowd to the concierge's desk. One of the men was obviously English—the first indication of initiative on the part of the management Prince Alexander had discovered—and was explaining with patient tact that Mr. So-and-so was away in Paris. The other answered a telephone call and then turned inquiringly to the Prince.

"Piovelli?" he said. "No, Monsieur, I've never heard of him."

"The Manager," explained Prince Alexander. "I want to see the Manager."

"The Chief of Internal Services, I expect you mean. Room 756 on the third floor, please."

Prince Alexander went to the third floor, as he was told, and sent in his card to room 756. He was received by an attractive young lady, who, like everyone else in the hotel, was polite but busy. "You want tickets, I suppose?" she said. "I'm afraid there's no chance of getting in to the Disarmament Commission or to the Council meetings, but I can let you have a ticket for to-morrow's Assembly."

"But I don't want tickets."

She looked at him with mingled astonishment and impatience. "You're the first person who has said that to me this week," she remarked. "But what *do* you want?"

"I came to see about a job," stammered Prince Alexander.

"What sort of a job? I'll get someone to see you."

He no longer ventured to talk of management. The idea of managing an hotel staffed by efficient young ladies, such as the one who sat before him with piles of different coloured tickets on her desk, terrified him. "I had thought of a job as interpreter, or something of that sort," he explained humbly.

"I'm afraid there's not much chance. There are very few vacancies. Still, we'll see what we can do." She took up the telephone and asked for M. Durand. "I have here," she stated, "Prince Alexander Sobelinski, who wants to see you about a post as interpreter."

Then she turned to Prince Alexander. "M. Durand will be pleased to see you. I'll take you to his room."

"But I'm afraid you are very busy. I can find my way," Alexander assured her with new humility in his voice. He knew admirably how to deal with the young ladies who were abrupt merely because they were cheeky—a type, it seemed to him, that had become very common since the war—but never before had he come across young ladies who were abrupt because they were really busy. In this particular case the young lady was kind, but her very kindness made him, Prince Alexander Sobelinski, feel unimportant and insignificant. So he protested that he would find the way himself.

"No, I'll come with you all right," she said. "I

shall be only too glad to get away from those awful tickets for a moment. You can have no idea how people fight for them. They don't mind picking each other's pockets for tickets to take them into the Disarmament Commission."

Before he could ask her any questions about these tickets she had handed him over to M. Durand, who led him into another room which had been converted from a bedroom into an office. What, he wondered, could old Piovelli's successor be thinking of to allow all these unexpected people to set up offices in his hotel. "You know Piovelli?" he asked.

Jean Durand shook his head. "Never heard of him, I'm afraid."

"Who runs this place, then?" asked Prince Alexander.

"Sir Eric Drummond."

"An Englishman! Rather unusual." It explained a number of unexpected things, the Prince told himself. English people were strange in many ways, and hotel-running was rather out of their sphere.

"I should like to see him some time," went on Prince Alexander. "The truth is I should rather like some work here. Perhaps as interpreter or something of the kind."

Jean Durand looked a little doubtful. "I daresay I could arrange for Sir Eric to see you, although he's terribly busy just now. But I'm afraid there's no exam. for interpreters for months to come."

"Exam.!" exclaimed Prince Alexander. "I must say this is the strangest hotel I've ever been in."

"Hotel!" exclaimed Durand in his turn. "It's not an hotel; it's the headquarters of the League of Nations."

"But it used to be the Hôtel National."

"*Used* to be," echoed Durand, with discreet emphasis on the first word.

Prince Alexander sank down into an armchair which had obviously been taken over as part of the hotel furniture. "Then that explains all the serious-looking people downstairs," he muttered after a pause.

Jean Durand laughed. "We're not quite as solemn as we look," he declared. "We've got over thirty nationalities represented on the permanent staff, and we couldn't get on together unless we kept our sense of humour. We're particularly busy at the moment, and that's what gives us all our worried looks. No, I'm sorry, I didn't mean that," he broke off, as the Prince rose to go. "As a matter of fact, I'm rather slack for the moment, as I don't get going until the evening. All the minutes have to be translated during the night, you know, and served up to the delegates with their morning coffee. Besides, let's see if there's possibility of any work, if that's what you are after. Might just as well try here as an hotel."

"Quite," assented Prince Alexander hopefully. "I should think I've just the right sort of qualifications—knowledge of languages, and all that."

"Yes, yes," agreed Jean Durand without much enthusiasm. Then he brightened up. "I wonder if I might offer you some tea. It would give me great pleasure. Then we could talk over your plans."

He led the way, not on to the terrace where one took tea of old, but down a servants' staircase into a cellar, where were several tea tables, several people and a noise of animated conversation. Large pipes crossed the ceiling, and Prince Alexander had the feeling that he had somehow walked into some annex to the Underground Railway. He felt rather insulted that Durand should have brought him down here.

His companion began explaining who were some of the people at the other tables. There was a British Cabinet Minister, the Prime Minister of Latvia, an Italian General, a Dutch cartoonist, a party of American Senators and Congressmen, André Maurois, the French writer, and several other distinguished people. "It's not a very swagger restaurant, this canteen," he ended apologetically, "but it's cheap and good. Besides, one of the few things the war has taught us all is to eat in discomfort."

"Yes, I suppose that's so," said Prince Alexander, but he told himself that he had not learned even that much. He began asking about work.

"The trouble is," Jean Durand pointed out, "that most of us are more or less specialists. I could give you a chit to someone in the section you were keen on. Know much about Mandated Territories, for example?"

"Er—no. Not exactly."

"Minorities?"

"No."

"Economic or financial expert?"

"No," said Prince Alexander, with some emphasis as he thought of the low price he had obtained for his pearl tie-pin when he had pawned it before the advent of Juanita.

"Transit and Communications? Malaria? Public Health? Disarmament? Social Welfare?" Durand rattled off a whole list, ending with "Refugees."

"I know a good deal about *them*," said Prince Alexander. But his knowledge was not, apparently, the sort of knowledge that was required. Besides, it had occurred to Durand that his nationality would be a drawback, since Russia was not a member of the League.

Durand lapsed into silence, for he did not know what to suggest. Prince Alexander sat puffing at a cigarette and staring out of the window at the lake. He was thinking that two floors above this cellar had been one of the rooms of his private suite in 1914. It was all very difficult. That fellow, Vladimir Ulianov, of whom Rezanov had talked, had become a gigantic figure in contemporary history. The Hôtel National had become the offices of an international civil service. And opposite him sat one of the members of this civil service trying to find tactful language in which to explain that he had no qualifications for a job. Yes, it was all very difficult.

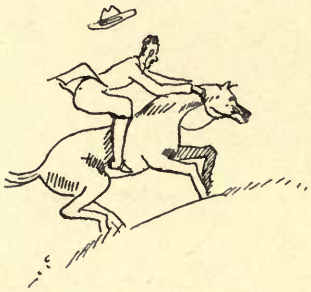
"Since languages seem to be your strong point," suggested Durand, "you might like to have a shot at the next translator's exam. Of course, the salary is not enormous, but the work is quite interesting, and I daresay your nationality would not be an insuperable barrier. If you like to leave me your address, I could notify you, but the exam. probably won't be held for another year."

"Thanks," said Prince Alexander Sobelinski, "but I don't think I will trouble you. You see, the truth is that I expect to get married in a few days, and to go out to the Argentine."

"But the job? This work you wanted?"

"Only a vague idea, a whim," Prince Alexander assured him as he bid him good-bye. Then he walked slowly towards the street entrance. In the old days a crowd of porters and messenger boys would have watched him, eager to do his bidding. Now the only person who spoke to him was a harassed gentleman who came out of a room just as he was passing and said: "Excuse me, but did you notice where the Spanish Ambassador went? I forgot to give him a document."

"I did not," said Prince Alexander Sobelinski rather gruffly. "It's all very different and difficult," he told himself as he stepped into Doña Maria's Daimler. He repeated the phrase as the car glided out of the gateway. "But after all," he added to comfort himself, "I shan't feel so out of it over there."



The Diamond Ear-ring

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The Diamond Ear-ring

I

AS he waded through the mud of the internment camp Ivan Deane saw something sparkling at his feet. He picked up an ear-ring of unusual pattern. It was shaped like a mark of interrogation, the loop of which represented a serpent, while the dot was a single large brilliant. The serpent consisted of diamonds, or artificial diamonds, with two small emeralds for its eyes.

As he examined this bauble, a number of Bolshevik soldiers crowded round him, and he suddenly realised the awkwardness of his position. Obviously some soldier had looted this ear-ring in Poland and had

dropped it in this East Prussian camp. There were said to be forty thousand Bolsheviks interned in this camp at Arys and there was probably not one who had not brought loot with him in some form when he had crossed the frontier from Poland. The Bolshevik army was carrying out its spectacular retreat of 1920 from Warsaw and probably the main army had had no time for collecting valuable Polish souvenirs. But these refugees who had flocked across the frontier into Germany had brought horses, cattle, watches, books, clothes, jewelry and anything else that they might be able to exchange for decent food and lodging. Who was the owner of the diamond ear-ring?

Deane held it up in front of the little group of soldiers, but nobody liked to claim it. Instead, men thrust other treasures before him—watches, silver spoons and bundles of Russian and Polish bank-notes. He was a foreigner, and they needed German marks. Their own loot, much of it of real value, interested them only in so far as it could be converted into marks and, thus, into food, drink and clothing. They were too tired to worry about anything else—even the ownership of the diamond ear-ring.

It would be useless to hand the thing over to the camp commandant, for the commandant was a German, and the gift to him of a looted ear-ring would not help to alleviate the misery of these shabby, miserable, unwashed members of the Russian army. He consulted a Bolshevik officer whom he had met as he wandered through the camp and whose knowledge of French had helped him to get a "story" for his paper.

"Why, keep the thing, of course," said the Russian. "There's nothing else to be done. We've no organ-

isation here. It's everyone for himself, and if you like the bit of loot you happen to have picked up, well, so much the better for you." He said something in Russian to his companions, and they all nodded their heads emphatically. "You see?" he went on. "Nobody claims it. It's yours. But if you care to leave me a few marks I'll make the fairest distribution I can amongst the men who happen to be here."

Thus, by handing over a few German notes, Ivan Deane quietened his conscience. Probably the ear-ring had no value, and, in any case, there was nobody to claim it. As he stumbled on through the dusk to the camp entrance, where he had left the motor car that was to take him from this hell to the comparative cleanliness of Danzig, he glanced back over his shoulder. His officer friend, distinguishable because he wore neat, if muddy, leggings while the others had sacking tied round their calves, was carefully distributing the German money, and the soldiers, hopeful at last of a proper meal, had changed in appearance. They were still gloomy and silent, but they stood upright, as though they had dropped their immense burdens of fatigue. They held out anxious hands towards the little bundle of 50-mark notes.

The horse-dealers from all over Germany who were converging on Arys to buy up stolen Polish horses had occupied every hotel bedroom for miles around. There was nothing for it but to motor back to Danzig, and the chauffeur, who had driven German lorries in Belgium throughout the war, volunteered to drive all night—he would doubtless get a larger tip in consequence. Fitfully, Ivan Deane slept as the car bumped and jolted on its way through miles of forest and past the cold, gleaming expanses of the Masurian Lakes.

Once, feeling in his pocket for his match-box, he came across the ear-ring and took it out to examine it in the moonlight. He knew nothing about jewelry and cared less. But, being cold, hungry and lonely, he felt sentimental. He tried to picture this trifle swinging under the dark hair of some beautiful Polish aristocrat. He saw her wearing it in the happier times of peace—or were those times less happy, since she must have lived under the Russian domination? He wondered who she could be, where she was and how she had come to lose this strange serpent, with its sharp, green eyes. How had the ear-ring found its way to the mud of the Bolshevik internment camp at Arys?

Ivan Deane yawned and pushed the diamond ear-ring back into his waistcoat pocket. Better get some sleep while he could, for as soon as he got back to Danzig he would have to write a column or so about the internment camp at Arys.

II

When Constantinople became so crowded with refugees from Sevastopol and Novorossisk that you could hardly walk a yard in Péra without meeting some Russian of good family reduced to beggardom, Countess Vera Barikina was working hard to produce order out of chaos and courage out of despair. Too many of her compatriots were willing to crowd in some miserable room to talk through the night of the horrors they had suffered and the best means of driving out the Bolsheviks from Moscow. From time to time some new general, helped on by money or munitions sent from Paris or London, set out to reconquer Russia, and the Russian colony in Con-

stantinople was filled with facile optimism, which gave way all too soon to hopelessness when stragglers from one more defeated army reached the city. Countess Vera was one of the very few who showed equanimity. She knew Russia could never again become what it once was. She and her like would never return to their quiet lives, as empty but as spacious as the Steppes themselves. For her no more dances at Kiev, no more visits to her Uncle Ivan in St. Petersburg. The old Russia was dead and there was as yet no place for its rulers in the new Russia that was being shaped and moulded by Lenin. Of course she resented it, of course she hated the Bolsheviks, but at least she was not going to be a helpless refugee, living for years on charity and the illusion that, sooner or later, she would return to her country house and her peasants and her lands in Volhynia.

The other Russians, for the most part, looked on at her courage and her energy with tolerant wonder. The less charitable suggested that she could afford not to worry, since she had escaped with all her jewels, while they . . . and then followed, for the thousandth time, the recital of their own sufferings and misfortunes. A few of them, on the other hand, welcomed her efforts to organise them, worked on her committees, got in touch with the relief societies, fed starving children and tried to find work that would make them independent. Instead of talking of an evening, they came round to Vera's room and learned to typewrite on her second-hand machine.

But the cost of living in Constantinople was prohibitive, and when Vera had to begin selling her jewelry to keep alive she decided the time had come to leave. In Rome she founded, with three other Russians, a little restaurant in the Via Sistina, which

failed because her colleagues were too willing to chatter with those of the clients who were friends and to neglect those who were merely snobbish strangers anxious to be waited upon by a countess. Just when the outlook began to be really depressing she found regular work at the International Institute of Agriculture. She could now face the future without anxiety. She could just pay her way and, if the worst came to the worst, she had always her jewels to fall back upon.

But in the early summer of 1920 the Polish armies drove back the Bolsheviks to Kiev. In the large strip of Russian territory that was thus freed from the Soviet *régime* was Countess Vera Barikina's own home, near Zhitomir. Her land, she knew, would have been distributed to the peasants, but there must remain some shadow of the former splendour. The International Institute was forgotten, an insignificant string of pearls was sold to a jeweller in the Corso, and within a few days Vera was in Warsaw clamouring for a permit to travel in the wake of the Polish army to her home.

But already the retreat had begun. The lines of communication had failed and the Polish army was hurrying towards Warsaw as quickly as, a few weeks before, it had hurried to Kiev. In the Ministries of Warsaw there was nobody who would give a permit to some Russian, who had probably treated the Poles as dirt before 1914, to return to her home in the fighting zone. Vera's patience at last failed her, and a polite but unhelpful letter from the last official in whom she had placed any hope was probably the cause of her handling her diamond ear-rings with such roughness that the little platinum chain of one of them snapped.

It was then that her luck seemed to change. She was returning to the Hôtel de l'Europe from a little

shop where she had left the ear-ring for repair when a motor car drew up near her, and Vanda Modrzewska jumped out.

"Why, Vera," she cried, "who ever expected to meet you? We haven't met since those glorious days in St. Petersburg. And your uncle, Ivan Ivanovitch, where is he? How long will you be here? Are you alone?"

Vera replied to the questions as best she could, and before she had time to make inquiries in her turn it was arranged that she should leave that very evening for Vanda's country house. "My husband will see someone in the Government about you. We'll get a message sent to the front to assure the protection of your property," the Polish girl explained, "and until your permit is ready you must stay with me at Ostrolenka."

For a few days Vera knew again the spacious family life of a country house, and Jan, Vanda's husband, was tactful enough to treat her as though the war, with its collapse of the Russians and its consequent elevation of the Poles, had never occurred. There was some difficulty about transport for her, but each time he came down from Warsaw he was a little more optimistic. "I hope to hear to-morrow," he would say, but he did not like to explain that the delay was due to the hurried retreat of the Polish army, which had already relinquished Vera's home, and a few hundred thousand other homes as well, to the Bolsheviks. There were rumours of impending disaster, and there was some panic in the village, but Jan said very little, and Vera and Vanda were too sleepily content to worry until they had to.

Jan was sent by his Government on an important mission to Danzig to make arrangements for the

transit of munitions through the Free City to the Polish Corridor. His urgent telegram to his wife to come to Warsaw was never delivered owing to the confusion created in the capital by the Russian advance, and it was only when a weary Polish officer knocked her up during the night to announce that Bolshevik soldiers were already in the village that Vanda realised her home was in danger. The old Mercedes was brought out of the garage, and the family, the more valuable luggage and as many servants as could be accommodated were crowded into it. In the confusion and the darkness, and how she never knew, Countess Vera Barikina lost the little bag containing all her jewels. There was nobody to blame except herself for her carelessness in worrying more about the old cook and the old head gardener, both half-hysterical with fright (due in great part to what they had heard of her own adventures with the Bolsheviks), than about her own belongings.

The little jeweller in Warsaw, hearing of her misfortune, mounted her one ear-ring as a brooch, and she set out, almost in tears, for Paris, where Vanda thought that Polish friends of hers could help to find her former school friend more remunerative work than that offered by the International Institute of Agriculture in Rome.

It was not only the thought that she had now nothing of value to depend upon in an emergency that sapped Vera's courage. Her jewels had been her one remaining link with the luxuries and splendours of the past. There was now only one ear-ring, a gift to her great-grandmother from Alexander I, to remind her that, however difficult the present might be, the past had its comforting memories.

The taxicab which she took at the Gare de l'Est

was driven by a Russian refugee, a former professor of science at Moscow. "One lives as one can," he said. "There is consolation in numbers, and there are hundreds of us at this sort of work in Paris. It's difficult, but it might be worse. I always say that to myself—it might be worse."

With renewed courage Vera set about unpacking her belongings in the shabby hotel bedroom that was now her home.

III

An American journalist and his Russian wife took Ivan Deane, one night after the theatre, to a crowded cabaret-restaurant in a cellar near the Panthéon. There were a few French people there, two or three Anglo-Saxons, one noisy Finn with a large and jovial appetite and a great number of Russians, some in evening clothes and some very shabby, some singing cheerfully and some glaring through the tobacco smoke with eyes of infinite misery. There was a small space for dancing and around it were a score of tables on which was an untidy mixture of tea cups, slices of lemon, champagne bottles, glasses of beer and innumerable cigarette ends.

Deane and the American journalist shared a kitchen chair. The Russian wife was offered an uncomfortable seat on a cushioned bench, but she occupied it for less then ten minutes in the hour. Now she was chatting to the star *danseuse*—a girl with a short, fur-trimmed skirt, a large expanse of bare legs and fur-topped Russian boots—who was dark, sulky and, it was alleged, always drugged with cocaine. The next minute she was holding out her hand to a tall, grey-haired gentleman, once the governor of a province and

now contributor of social paragraphs to the Parisian papers. A moment later she was exchanging confidences about cheap lingerie with a plain, but extraordinarily attractive, woman, who appeared to be immensely popular.

"That's the Countess Vera Barikina," explained the American journalist. "She's the only woman in the room who ever remembers that my wife's married and that her husband's still alive."

As though she had heard him above the din, Vera rose from her chair and zig-zagged between the tables to join them. She allowed them to order a coffee for her and turned to Ivan Deane. "You must come here often," she said, "and bring some friends. We Russians can't make the place pay by ourselves, as we've got no money, so we have to get known by foreigners. You see, I'm quite frank with you, and you must forgive me, but it's not for myself I speak—I give singing lessons, and have nothing to grumble about. But it's for Anna Zabolotnov. She's doing everything she can to make the place succeed—that's her over there in the corner, in black—and we all want to help her. She's got a father and three children to keep."

Ivan Deane listened a little inattentively, for he was staring at Countess Vera's brooch—a diamond serpent shaped to form a question mark, a serpent with small emeralds as eyes.

She noticed his look. "It's quaint, isn't it? And it's rather valuable. I can make a lot of fuss about it because it's the only piece of jewelry I have left."

"I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to stare. But it caught my eye. I seem to have seen one like it before."

"I'm surprised, because it's not a common design.

It's really an ear-ring, but its brother was dropped somewhere on the road between Ostrolenka and Warsaw—with everything else I possessed. So it was turned into a brooch for me."

She told them its history—how the Tsar Alexander had given the ear-rings to her great-grandmother when she was married to a young officer of the Imperial Guard, and how, according to rumour, the ear-rings commemorated the two occasions upon which the Tsar had asked her a question to which she had been rash and virtuous enough to reply in the negative.

"So you see," she concluded, "they—or, rather, it, since there's only one of them now—mean rather a lot to me now. It's not so much the value in money, but I'm sentimental. And, of course, things aren't always very easy, and one likes to remember old times. It's a bad thing to do—morbid, I suppose, but I do it, even if it makes me more discontented with my lot. It's my one vice, my one drug."

A weedy, vicious-looking boy, who had been watching Vera from across the room, was suddenly standing jealously above her. He bowed a little rudely to the two men. "Is it not time to give me a dance?" he asked her.

Vera Barikina smiled resignedly at Ivan Deane. Then she rose. "Mikhail Mikhailovitch," she said, "your jealousy is incorrigible."

She turned back before she left the table. "You mustn't think I'm grumbling," she declared, almost fiercely, "because I'm not. And I'm not often sentimental. It's only the ear-ring makes me so. It's my one soft spot."

"Unfortunately," commented the American, when she had gone, "that's not true. She's got too many soft spots, has the Countess Vera. She's too fond of

helping others and, like so many people of that sort, she's got no judgment. Why, look at that poor fish, Mikhail Mikhailovitch. Just because he's in love with her—the only thing I've ever heard in his favour—she allows him to hang around her all day. It's my belief she gives him all his food, because he never does a darn stroke of work himself. If you want to know what I think of Mikhail Mikhailovitch . . ."

But his opinion of Mikhail Mikhailovitch must not be printed here.

IV

Vera Barikina had many friends, but not one who was sufficiently intimate with her to know her thoughts. They envied her the apparent ease with which she had adapted herself to new circumstances, but they had no idea how difficult that adaptation had really been, how incomplete it still was. There was a satisfaction she could never have anticipated in earning her own living, but she missed the cultured ease, the flattering sensation of power over her peasants and, of course—since she was still under thirty-five—the gaiety of the season in St. Petersburg. In the old days she had never been overwhelmed by this feeling of her "littleness" which sometimes frightened her now. In some odd way her diamond brooch, while it kept alive her regrets for the past, gave her more courage to face the immediate future.

Ivan Deane had never done anything with his piece of loot from the East Prussian internment camp. Sometimes he had taken it out of the drawer in which he was sentimental enough to keep odd souvenirs of his journeys as a special correspondent since the war—odd coins and worthless bank-notes, a decoration or two from Baltic or Balkan States, and scores of snap-

shots of half-forgotten people. But for several reasons, one of which was laziness, he had never taken it to a shop to see how much he could get for it. It was, therefore, no great hardship to him to slip the ear-ring into a box and to send it anonymously to Countess Barikina. He would probably not have done so had he not been attracted to her, attracted by her courage and her charming Slav ugliness. But he did not stop to analyse his motives. The ear-ring, he told himself, was her property which she valued very highly, whereas to him it meant little or nothing. Besides, it is so comforting to perform, from time to time, a good action.

Had he been able to see Vera's face when she opened the mysterious little packet he would have been surprised by her pleasure. Since the outbreak of the Revolution nothing, except perhaps the hope that the Polish advance to Kiev would give her back her home, had so delighted her. And when Ivan Deane next met her in the Russian Cabaret she wore no brooch, but the two diamond ear-rings flashed proudly under her dark hair, just as he had seen them in his fleeting dream as the motor raced through the Masurian night on the way to Danzig.

V

Ivan Deane went rarely to the Russian Cabaret, for he spent very little time in Paris, and when he was there he was generally with colleagues at the reserved table in the Café Napolitain or in the *New York Bar*, to which every newspaper correspondent in Europe finds his way within a few hours of his arrival in the city. But, by a strange coincidence, when next he went back to the little smoky cellar, he found the whole place in an uproar over the diamond ear-rings.

For some time he had no idea what everyone was talking about, for he understood no Russian, and his one friend, Vera Barikina, was not there. But he heard her name mentioned time after time, and when Madame Zabolotnov, the proprietress, came over to say good evening to him, he asked her if anything had happened.

"Happened? Ah, you have not heard about Vera and that scoundrel?" She explained in Russian that here was somebody who knew nothing of the scandal, and all the strangers crowded round him, with the eagerness of all human beings to impart bad news.

"You know Vera Barikina's wonderful diamond ear-rings . . ." someone began.

"The only jewelry she had to remind her of the past. . . ."

"The present from Tsar Alexander. . . ."

"And how she valued them. . . ."

"They have been stolen."

"Stolen?" asked Deane. "By whom?"

"By that serpent, that little beast, Mikhail Mikhailovitch. . . ."

"For whom she had done everything. . . . She was kind to him just because he was such a weak fool. That's how Vera is. . . ."

They chattered on while Ivan Deane recalled Vera Barikina's look of pride and pleasure when he had remarked on the presence of two ear-rings instead of one brooch. When she had told him, at their first meeting, the history of the diamonds, she had managed somehow to convey an impression of her attachment to them. Not, of course, because of their monetary value, but because they gave her courage, gave her a "way out" to the past when the present seemed too

difficult and the future too doubtful. What rotten luck, he thought.

Suddenly he was aware that he was alone again. All the Russians had moved over towards the door. And in their midst was Countess Vera Barikina herself, listening to their condolences and their imprecations against Mikhail Mikhailovitch.

Ivan Deane wanted to leave, for he did not know what to say to her. But before he could attract Madame Zabolotnov's attention to pay his bill, Vera had shaken off her sympathisers and had come over to his table.

"I'm most awfully sorry," he stammered. "It is the most beastly luck; and what a mean thing to do."

"Poor Mikhail Mikhailovitch!" said Vera Barikina, more to herself than to him. "Poor weak boy!" For quite a long time she stared at the spotted check table-cloth. Then she looked up, and smiled. "It's just as well," she said. "It's quite a good thing. They made me think too much of the past. An excuse for cowardice. That's the fault of us Russian refugees. We live in the past instead of the future. And now I shan't be tempted any more. So everything's for the best."

Although she smiled, Ivan Deane was almost sure that her lip trembled, as though tears were near.

La Boîte à Musique

La Boîte à Musique

I

A SHORT, dark man, holding a cocktail with a reverent steadiness, looked round in search of a chair. As usual at that hour, Maxim's Bar was crowded, but his sharp, Southern eyes found a vacant seat by the little table at which Ivan Deane sat reading *The Times*. He edged through the crowd to this chair, but was so attentive to his own drink that he bumped into the table and upset Deane's sherry.

"Damn your eyes," said that gentleman in anger. But his anger evaporated in the warmth of the other's apologies. In a very few minutes they were both chatting away over two new *apéritifs*, and the dark man, who appeared to come from somewhere in South-eastern Europe—he spoke French, German and Italian with equal facility—was expounding his theories about the war. It had not been, he con-

tended, a struggle between Latins and Teutons, but between wine-drinkers and beer-drinkers, the former—gay, sparkling and a little insincere, the latter—solid, stolid and a little heavy and brutal. There was no hostility in France towards the Rhinelander because he drank wine, and there was much hostility towards the Prussian because he drank beer.

Ivan Deane amused himself for five minutes by tearing this theory to bits—What about his own countrymen, who drank spirits, and the Americans, who were beginning their campaign in favour of water? he asked—and then suggested that they might continue their discussions over dinner. His companion agreed, and they wandered up the Rue Royale together in search of a taxi.

"My name is Ivan Deane," declared the Englishman by way of tardy introduction.

The other muttered an unintelligible name in several syllables.

"It can't be done," said Deane. "I shall call you Alfred."

Over coffee, in a little restaurant near the Bourse, they were still generalising. They discussed, as all Paris discussed, the Peace Conference which was then in progress, and they had very little difficulty in solving all the problems which so worried President Wilson, Mr. Lloyd George, M. Clemenceau and Signor Orlando. The decreasing population of France and the increasing population of Germany admittedly made things more difficult, but even in this field they had suggestions to make.

"The cause of all the trouble," asserted Ivan Deane, "is the cabaret."

"*Mais voyons*, I thought we were so much in favour of them that we were going on to one a little later."

"But I'm only thinking of the cabaret in so far as it concerns married men. Any cabaret is an aphrodisiac. The songs are sentimental, the funny man's stories are pretty hot stuff, and the dancing is meant to be exciting. The Frenchman goes there alone or, worse still, with his mistress. The German goes with his wife, and in due course another baby appears. It's all very simple."

At this moment they were interrupted by a young lady who had been watching them from the next table. Alfred had, naturally enough, been paying rather more attention to her than to Ivan Deane's theories and, thus encouraged, she slid along the bench to join them. Seeing *The Times*, she displayed her knowledge of English. "Glass beer," she demanded.

Alfred ordered the glass of beer.

"Spik Ingleesh vair well," she continued, pointing at herself.

"Really?" said Ivan Deane politely.

"Shakespeare, vatair closet, plum pouding," she went on. This, however, was all she could say in that language.

"A lady with an unexpected, if limited, vocabulary," laughed Ivan Deane.

"But original," put in Alfred. "She should join our party."

"As you like, Alfred, old man. It's your funeral." But "funeral" was a word the young lady understood, and copious apologies and explanations were called for.

Angèle's good humour was soon restored, and she helped them to decide how best to spend the rest of the evening and most of their money. She was as reluctant as they were to go to any of the usual resorts of the foreigners along the main boulevards of Mont-

martre. No *Bal Tabarin* or *Moulin Rouge*, no *Chat Noir* or *Enfer* for her. But, if they wanted to see a little bit of Paris, the real Paris, she would take them to *La Boîte à Musique*, right at the summit of Montmartre and far above the "Champagne Line," as she called the brightly lit boulevards half-way up the hill.

So that, when they could at length bribe a taxi-driver to take them up to the Place du Tertre, Angèle brought them to a restaurant with long tables running down each side. In the centre of the room was a small open space where one could dance to the music of two Italians, one with a violin and one with a guitar. From the ceiling hung an odd jumble of hams, chianti flasks, paper streamers and flags of the Allied nations. Deane did not know what Alfred's nationality was, but he himself was so obviously English or American that everyone sang "Tipperary" and "Over There," and, although all the other people in the place were French, he was at once received as a member of a large family party.

This was partly due to Angèle, who knew everybody, but partly also to the fact that there was no formality about *La Boîte à Musique*. Most of the girls here were undoubtedly ladies of easy virtue, but they were, so to say, off duty. One good soul sitting near Ivan Deane shocked him thoroughly by producing, after sensational struggles underneath her blouse and skirt, a corset which she rolled up and put beside her on the table. And when she noticed Ivan's distress, she explained without the least embarrassment that she expected a baby, and that her corset was uncomfortable at meal times. No, there was certainly no formality, no playing up to the foreigner, at *La Boîte à Musique*.

Germaine, who mysteriously became a member of the party, was more delicately nurtured, although she

was bubbling over with vitality. Being without any such impediment as the lady with the corset, she made Ivan Deane dance until he was ready to drop, and until everyone else in the restaurant stopped to clap and cheer. He spent far more money on Germaine than he should have done, but did not grudge a franc of it. She made up for long, gloomy, muddy months at the front.

"Why, even the Peace Conference is bearable now," he assured Alfred at one stage of the evening. "I'm glad you began all this by upsetting my sherry."

Alfred grinned a little foolishly. "I'll do it again. Anything to please a friend. Only it's champagne this time." And he did.

Ivan Deane repeated the words he had used at Maxim's hours ago—or was it years ago, since he and Alfred seemed to be such old friends?—but he was too happy to be angry. Besides, champagne did not stain one's clothes, and the best thing to do with this sweet, sticky stuff, with "Goût Americain" stuck on the bottle, was undoubtedly to upset it.

The evening came to an end, for dawn follows night, however much Montmartre may protest. To what sort of an end? That must be left to the reader to decide for himself, and, in deciding, he will doubtless remember that "*honi soit qui mal y pense.*"

II

"Hullo, are you on the same story?" asked Ivan Deane none too graciously, as Tommy Bennett was shown into the reception room of the Lusitanian delegation to the League of Nations Assembly in Geneva.

"I thought Belnitch might have something to say about the crisis." Bennett dropped into an armchair

while Deane resumed his angry pacing up and down the hotel sitting-room. "I've seen Belnitch," he stormed, "and I've seen every other guy of the Lusitanian delegation, and they won't say a word. I'm after the Foreign Minister himself, and if he doesn't hurry there'll be hell to pay. If I don't get a story out of him soon every newspaper man in Geneva will be trekking along here." He relapsed into silence, and amused himself by rolling his cigar with considerable dexterity from one corner of his mouth to the other. The cigar suffered a little in the process, and from time to time he spat out pieces of tobacco leaf on to the Aubusson carpet.

"Been here long?" asked Bennett.

"Just about since the flood. Must have missed a lot of good copy while I've been waiting for this blighter—Cæsar's conquest of Gaul and all that. And I'm just about fed up to the back teeth. If he doesn't show up in ten minutes I'm going to chuck up the whole thing, and the fellows on the desk at home can twiddle their thumbs instead of writing headlines to my story from Geneva."

"It *is* a rotten sort of life," agreed Bennett. "Running from one delegation to another with hardly the time for a cocktail in between. I've been to the British, the Poles, the French and the Italians about this crisis. And they all said nothing with great volubility. All except the British, that is. They left out the volubility part of it. So I hoped I might get a line out of the Lusitanians. Shan't try to see this Foreign Minister, though. Not one of my ambitions. Do you know him?"

"Not on your life. It's hard enough to keep up with the big guns in an ordinary country. But in places like Lusitania, where they go in for revolutions

and sudden changes of *régime*, such odd birds pop up. Now take this little fellow. I believe he used to have some very minor post in their Foreign Office—messenger or something in that line most likely—and here he is Foreign Minister at the age of thirty-eight."

Tommy Bennett was fetched away by an elegant young secretary to see Belnitch, the Lusitanian Ambassador in Paris, before Ivan Deane could give his frank opinion of Foreign Ministers in general. This sudden loss of his audience made him all the more angry. He had missed a couple of good stories in the last week, through bad luck rather than through carelessness, and he had been pleased with himself for thinking of the Lusitanian Foreign Minister before any other journalist had done so. And now, despite his persistence, which was considerable, he was being mobbed by polite Lusitanians who assured him that his Excellency the Foreign Minister could see nobody before to-morrow. Would ten in the morning suit Mr. Deane ?

No, it would not, Mr. Deane retorted with rather more force than politeness. By then the crisis would have been solved or everyone else would be clamouring for the Lusitanian point of view. His paper was only interested in exclusive stories. It must be now or never.

And apparently it was to be never, for the General Secretary of the Lusitanian Delegation came in to convey his Minister's definite and final refusal to give any interview until the morrow.

On the quay outside the Hôtel des Bergues Ivan Deane paused in uncertainty. He might go across to the Metropole to tackle another delegation or two, he might go to the League of Nations Secretariat, where he would find scores of his colleagues standing around in

the entrance hall, or he might chuck work for the day and wander along to the Club International for a drink and a game of billiards. But here, again, he would find several of his colleagues, and they would talk "shop" even as they leant over the billiard table to pot the red.

No, he had had enough. He was sick of it all. It was a great game, journalism, but there were moments when it got on his nerves, and this was one of them. He could not take the Lusitanian Foreign Minister by the throat and squeeze an interview out of him, if only because he did not even know what he looked like. And, in his view, the Lusitanian Foreign Minister was the only man in Geneva who could give him just the "dope" he wanted for his paper. Therefore, to the devil with work.

He strolled along by the river and then crossed the Pont des Bergues. Someone in Paris had told him of a little restaurant near Plainpalais, where he would be able to dine in peaceful obscurity without running the risk of meeting anybody who would remind him of the political crisis and his failure to get Lusitania's opinion of it. He was wise enough to write down in his address book the name of every restaurant or hotel in any part of the world which people recommended to him, and it was not long before he found himself in a shabby little café-restaurant, *Chez la Veuve Henriette.*

Having ordered the various *spécialités de la maison*, he leant back in his chair and examined the other diners. They delighted him, for they quite obviously had nothing to do with the League of Nations. They were stout, shiny-faced men and women who looked as though they had driven in from villages and farms for a weekly "blow-out." Every man had a serviette tucked in his collar, and every woman ate with an

unashamed heartiness which made Deane feel quite guilty when he refused a second helping out of the gigantic soup tureen. The only crisis which might worry these people would be a food strike or an effort to introduce Prohibition.

But Ivan Deane had congratulated himself too soon on his acquisition of solitude. While he was waiting for his *truites au bleu* a little, swarthy man entered the restaurant, looked round for a vacant table, gave a start when he saw the journalist, and hurried across to him with outstretched hands.

"*Mais mon cher ami*," he said "*que diable faites-vous dans cette galère?* Who would ever have thought of meeting you here? You remember, *n'est-ce-pas*, our evening in Paris? At the *Boîte à Musique*. What an evening! What a night!" Before Ivan Deane could reply the newcomer was seated at his table and was demanding the wine list. "I have re-discovered an old friend," he explained to the widow Henriette, "and we must celebrate our meeting."

Ivan Deane leant across the table. "Why, can it be Alfred?" he asked.

"Alfred? Ah, yes, that is good. Alfred! I had forgotten you called me Alfred. Why, I don't know, because it's not my name."

"Nor do I. It just came to me," said the other with an air of modesty. "One has these flashes."

"You have not forgotten, then?"

Of course he had not forgotten, although Alfred had become so much smarter in these four years. In ordinary circumstances he would still have dismissed him as a "dago," but recollections of the *Boîte à Musique* made him tolerant. With good grace he suggested that they should dine together.

"Let's see. It must be four years ago. You were

in Paris for the Peace Conference, if I remember aright. I've forgotten how we met, but . . ."

"Wasn't it at Maxim's?" put in Ivan Deane. "Yes, that was it. You upset my cocktail, and we got talking. Yes, and when we were dining Angèle joined us."

"Angèle. That's right. She was not too ugly, *celle-là*. And we were just wondering what to do when she suggested the *Boîte à Musique*."

"She wasn't hinting that we should take her too. At least, I don't think so, do you?"

"No, no," agreed the little Southerner, "but I felt she'd like to come. I felt she rather liked me and that we could have a cheery time together."

"And we did, by Jove. But the other one—where did we find her?"

"Why, at the *Boîte à Musique* itself. . . ."

"Ah, yes. I danced with her because I felt lonely. You and Angèle were too busy. So I asked her to join us. I remember now." He leant back in his chair and laughed.

The *Veuve Henriette* and her restaurant were forgotten, and the two chatted on about Paris. Ivan Deane, who had at first felt annoyed at being disturbed, was now delighted to have found his old friend. He was a little too neat, too polished, too greasy, but he had succeeded in driving out of Deane's mind all thought of the League of Nations, Lusitania and the Lusitanian Foreign Minister.

Over their *Chambertin* and, still more, over their *Marc*, they became almost as affectionate as they had been on that famous evening. Not quite, for Ivan Deane could remember that he had had his arm round Alfred's neck as they came down the Rue Blanche. It was strange, he thought, how people pass in and

out of one's life. Owing to an apology for a spilt drink at Maxim's he had shared some of the most intimate experiences of his life with this little "dago" whom he had never seen before and had never expected to see again. He did not know his name, his business, his nationality, but he could remember details about his love affairs and his religious beliefs of which, quite probably, no other person, however intimate, had any idea. A queer thing, life.

The more they drank, the more philosophically sentimental they became. They drank to the healths of the absent Angèle and Germaine; they talked sadly of the advance of age, although neither could be over forty; and they lamented the fact that already the foreign tourist had found his way as far up Montmartre as the *Lapin Agile*—how could they be sure that, even at this very moment, the *Boîte à Musique* was not crowded with people over from London for the week or week-end?

The Widow Henriette felt that these two clients were so valuable that she must hide her desire to shut up her restaurant and go home, and when Alfred did finally look at his watch he jumped to his feet with an expression of dismay. "I ought to have been back an hour ago," he explained. "I've got an awful lot of work to do here in Geneva. I had had enough of it and decided to take one evening off, but I did not know it was so late."

"Copy me, and go on strike," counselled Deane, but the other laughed and shook his head. They fought over the bottles of wine on their bill, for each wished to show hospitality on this memorable evening, but when Ivan Deane paid the major share his friend made no suggestion that they should meet again. And for this Deane was rather thankful. Their dinner

had been enjoyable, for they had talked over old times, but another dinner might be boring, for he doubted whether he and Alfred had anything in common except their taste in women and in wine—interesting topics, no doubt, but ones which, although women can never believe it, begin to pall after an hour or two. Chance had brought them together at an appropriate moment, when each desired to escape from the *tracas* of the present. The best thing was to leave any future meeting to the same agency.

They walked together as far as the Corraterie, where taxis could be found, and when Alfred hailed one Ivan Deane decided he would walk back to his hotel, accompanied by his pleasant memories of the *Boîte à Musique.* As he waved good-bye to his friend he was, therefore, more than a little annoyed to see Tommy Bennett and another journalist crossing the road to join him. Confound the fellow! He had managed to forget all about the political crisis for four hours, and here was Bennett to remind him of it again. However, it was too late to escape now.

"Congrats," said Tommy Bennett, as he came up.

"What the devil for?" asked Ivan Deane gruffly.

"Why, on getting your man. Nobody else could get hold of him."

"Don't know what you're talking about. What man?"

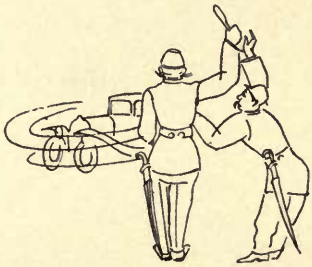
"Why, the Lusitanian Foreign Minister, of course."

Ivan Deane glared in astonishment. "Somebody's mad," he declared at length, "and I hope it's not me. I've never seen the Lusitanian Foreign Minister in my life."

"You can't get away with it like that," laughed Bennett, "when we actually saw you helping him into a taxi."

"Alfred the Lusitanian Foreign Minister?" Ivan Deane repeated the question three times to himself. This fellow whom he'd been trying to interview all day! And here he'd been, for well over three hours, exchanging jokes and clinking glasses with him! No, it couldn't be. . . .

When Ivan Deane gave expression to his feelings the words he used were English, and, therefore, were probably beyond the comprehension of passers-by. But there are certain gestures and certain intonations that are international, and Tommy Bennett had to bundle him into a taxi. Otherwise, the crowd that gathered would have reached dangerous dimensions. By the time two policemen had arrived on the spot to find out what the trouble was about, Ivan Deane, who alone could have told them, was urging on the taxi-driver in vain pursuit of Alfred, his lost Foreign Minister.



Mizzi

Mizzi

I

FRAU SACHER, with her inevitable cigar and one of her inevitable dogs, said "good night" quite affably to Ivan Deane, who was a good customer in these hard times, and withdrew to her office, on the walls of which hung scores of signed portraits of the archdukes, princes and other celebrities who had frequented her famous hotel and restaurant before the war. A benevolent old head waiter brought two glasses of "*chartreuse jaune*" at thirty thousand crowns a glass, and retired into the background, where he remained respectfully watchful. The only other people in the room were two concession hunters with diamond rings, American passports and strong Galician

accents, for the Austrians themselves could no longer afford to visit the bar, and, still less, the restaurant. Ivan Deane, in that mood of pensive tolerance that so often follows a good dinner, leant back and blew smoke at the ceiling, and mused on the ups and downs of life in after-war Europe.

Jimmy Randall broke in upon his musings. "I say, do tell me something about that secretary of yours," he begged.

"What, Mizzi? Oh, so that's why you've stood me this dinner, is it?"

"Don't be a fool. It's only that I got talking to her the other day, and, if you want to know, I'm taking her out for the day on Sunday."

"The devil you are!" Ivan Deane looked surprised. "I wonder that she's going to let you. It doesn't happen to everyone, although she's such a cheery little soul. Well, I'll tell you what I know about her. But she's a jolly fine girl, and don't you forget it."

"You needn't worry, you pious old blighter, but fire away."

Ivan Deane resumed his occupation of blowing smoke at the ceiling. Then he jumped to his feet. "Come along. Let's clear out of here. If you want to hear about Mizzi, you've got to come along to the Café Stern. I can't talk here."

Jimmy Randall handed a few hundred thousand crowns to the statesman-like head waiter and followed Deane out into the Kärntnerstrasse. The streets were almost empty, for a fine rain was falling. A few prostitutes accosted them pessimistically, and then retired to the doorways that gave them uncertain shelter from the weather. Jimmy Randall shivered. The place so little resembled the Vienna he had known

before the war. "Beastly gloomy. Worse than Leicester Square," he growled. "You expect this sort of weather there, and you don't here. Let's come in here." He stopped outside the entrance to the Bristol Bar.

"Not if you want to hear about Mizzi. I said the Café Stern."

"Oh, hell! Where is it? I've never even heard of it."

"Along by the Stadtpark. It's a place where very few foreigners go, but it's got a jolly good orchestra."

The two trudged along in silence. They were both cheerful individuals in ordinary circumstances, but their cheerfulness could not withstand the misery of Vienna in 1922. Country after country had refused further help to Austria and the Governments had not yet agreed to try, through the collective agency of the League of Nations, the financial salvation which their individual efforts could not achieve. Unemployment was increasing, and the exchange falling so rapidly that the Viennese had lost hope and courage. There was no fight left in them. They were resigned to collapse, and even the fictitious gaiety that had been introduced by foreign profiteers had now disappeared, for there was little left for the profiteers to buy. Relief kitchens doled out food and soup, but they could not restore courage to a country which no longer saw any use for courage.

The Café Stern was a fairly large place almost opposite the Stadtpark. It was undistinguished, except for its orchestra, which even Jimmy Randall could tell was good. Ivan Deane led the way to a table and, as he did so, he nodded cheerily to the first violinist. "See that chap?" he asked Randall

as soon as they had ordered their coffee. "What do you make of him?"

Randall stared at the violinist. "As a man, or a player? As a man I should imagine he was damned ill and as a player I should imagine he was damned good."

Ivan Deane whispered something to the waiter, who went across to the "*Herr Kapellmeister*." As soon as the orchestra had finished its selection from "La Tosca," the first violinist stood up to play a solo. It was Glazounov's "Meditation" and, as Randall put it, its rendering "swept one off one's feet." "Who is the fellow?" he asked. "What's he doing in a café orchestra?"

"Trying to earn a living," said Deane shortly. "He's a composer rather than a violinist, and, like most other musicians here, he's brought down to this sort of thing. And, if you want to know who he is, his name's Josef Kränzler. He's Mizzi's brother."

Josef Kränzler was bowing his thanks to the *habitués* of the café for their applause. He looked, Randall thought, about as ill as anybody could look. Although he was probably not more than twenty-three or twenty-four, his features twitched and his hands trembled. Mizzi always managed to seem so cheerful. It must be difficult with a brother so nervous and highly-strung. "Tell me about them, there's a good fellow," he begged.

"If you knew anything about music," Ivan Deane explained, "you'd know something about them, for their father, Professor Stefan Kränzler, used to have a pretty big reputation before the war. At least his Quartet did—the Kränzler Quartet was known all over Europe. But, if the old man had ability, his son had genius, or so everyone used to say. Mizzi knows a

thing or two about the piano and I don't think I've ever heard anyone get so much out of one before, but it was the brother who was going to do wonders. Just before the war he wrote two or three sonatas for violin and piano that were jolly well received in Berlin and other places abroad. I believe Eugen d'Albert, of the Philharmonie there, rather took him up, and every penny the father could save went to improve his son's training.

"The war, of course, messed everything up. Young Kränzler was given some cushy job behind the line, but he became a bit of a pacifist, and Austria could afford no such luxuries as conscientious objectors, so they sent the poor devil down to the Italian front. Spent a year or more on the Carso. Ever been there?"

Randall shook his head.

"Well, I have, and it's about the most God-forsaken spot I've ever struck. In winter the fellows froze in their trenches, for the whole place is a great ridge of rock, and all one could do was to blast ditches in it—ditches that were gutters and trenches at the same time. And in summer you had the sun beating down all day on the rock, so hot that it blistered your hands if you touched it, and there was no water within miles. And every shell that burst sent hundreds of rock splinters flying. That's why so many Austrians and Italians got blinded, and young Kränzler once told me he lived in a state of perpetual funk lest he should lose his eyesight, too, and not be able to do his own scoring any more.

"He's a poor sort of fish without much courage, and in the end he tried to desert. I don't know why they didn't shoot him, but they did all sorts of other things to him, and you see the result. His father died

just before the end of the war—partly of grief because of his son and because of the collapse of Austria—and I believe the mother died when they were kids, Mizzi and this fellow. It's been Mizzi who has kept everything going ever since. She's a brick."

"She looks it," put in Randall.

"After the war came the usual smash-up. Old man Kränzler had stinted himself of everything to put money into some Government stock so that young Josef could finish his studies, and all his shares wouldn't buy a case of champagne to-day if Mizzi had kept them. Same old story all over Central Europe. Like the three brothers. Remember them?"

Randall shook his head.

"One put his fortune into 'safe' securities, and the second spent all his on drink. When the smash came the first had nothing at all and the second had to keep him by selling the empty bottles in his cellar. As for the third one, he was shut up in an asylum in 1913 and was discharged again a few months ago. When he came out they gave him back what he had had in his pocket when he went in, so that he found he had a gold twenty crown piece. The cabby fainted when he gave him this to pay for the fare, and they offered him so many thousands of crowns at the bank for it that the poor fellow at once went back to the asylum and declared he wasn't cured. Then there was the story of the young student in Switzerland who . . ."

"But what about Mizzi?" interrupted Jimmy Randall.

"Oh, yes, Mizzi, of course. Well, I'll come to her in a second. But this boy used to write to his mother in Vienna once a week. He was pretty hard up, so he used to send his letter without a stamp on it, but

he used to put the stamp inside the envelope. His mother would have to pay three times the nominal value of the Swiss stamp, but it came to very little in Austrian crowns. Then she used to take the Swiss stamp out of the letter, sell it, and live on the proceeds for the rest of the week."

"Rot," ejaculated Randall.

"Well, rot if you like, but it's jolly near the truth. It's difficult to exaggerate the absurdities and hardships of the *Valuta*. Anyhow, to come back to Mizzi, she found herself almost without a penny, and with this wreck of a brother on her hands. He's done a bit of composing, but there's no music publisher in Vienna who can afford to publish it. So he's come down to this sort of thing, and he's lucky, even then, to get it. I believe he gets about forty thousand crowns a day for this—about half-a-crown—and he earns a few shillings by giving private lessons, which is how most of these fellows live nowadays. As for royalties on his music abroad, he told me the other day he had received about threepence for all the war period. Cheerful, isn't it? The trouble is, of course, that there are far too many first-class musicians in Vienna. Tumble over them wherever you go. But they can't afford visas on their passports to get abroad and start afresh. And they wouldn't have the courage to go even if they had the visas.

"There aren't many of them like Mizzi. She taught herself shorthand and managed, with the help of a few people, to get an introduction to Billy Goode—you know, Sir William Goode, who used to be the representative here of the Reparations Commission. He had no post for her, but, when I told him after the Genoa Conference that I was coming to Vienna and wanted temporary help, he sent her along to me.

And there you are. She works like the devil, and I'm sure almost all her money goes to help her brother. She thinks that if he could get going again as a composer a little success would give him back his nerve. So it might, but how's the poor devil to get any success in a place like this, where nobody's got money to buy food to fill their stomachs with? Poor little Mizzi. Don't know how she manages to keep so cheery."

"Amazing," agreed Jimmy Randall.

"Pity of it is, the brother seems to take it all for granted. He's so used to being spoilt that he doesn't realise she's giving up anything for him at all. She's a year older than he is, I believe, and she's always had to look after him. He always expects the best of everything, and can't realise that what they could afford last month they can't afford this, because the crown has gone down and the cost of living has gone up. Don't get much fun in life nowadays, these Viennese."

The two men smoked in silence for a while, and watched Josef Kränzler playing extracts from some popular musical comedy, when he might have been composing some sonata. "Not much fun in life nowadays," repeated Ivan Deane, half to himself.

"It's the girl I'm thinking of," said Jimmy Randall. "If he's a genius, he'll fight his way through in the end. If he's not, well, I suppose he'll go under, like millions of others since the war. God, what a mess we have made of things!"

When Randall took Mizzi out on the following Sunday he was prepared to be very sympathetic. But she would have none of it. They went by tram to Kobenzl and then climbed up the hill into the Wiener Wald. It was a warm spring day, and they sat on the

grass slope overlooking the Danube and Vienna, too beautiful in the distance for the misery and suffering it contained to seem possible.

"Let's forget all about it," begged Mizzi. "Of course it's difficult, and poor Josef has a terrible time in his orchestra. But he'll get better soon, and when he's well he'll be able to get on with his composing. I'd do anything to help him, because, you know, he's got genius. Daddy was sure of it, and Daddy was always right about that sort of thing. But it won't help Josef for me to be gloomy. Don't let's worry just for to-day. I've not had a whole day like this for months. We've got sandwiches, flowers and the sunshine, so what more do we want? Courage will pull us through."

She undid the parcel of sandwiches and spread the paper carefully over her knees to protect her dress. He noticed how threadbare her coat and skirt were, and she laughed gaily as she saw his look of distressful pity. "No, it's not Worth or Paquin, and I won't pretend it's new," she said, "but we don't worry much about that sort of thing nowadays. The main thing is that it's not worn into holes. In fact, it's an old coat and skirt I had before the war, and it's rather *chic* to have pre-war stuff. It shows it was good in the beginning, whatever it is now."

"It looks very nice. But it's like you to laugh about it."

"And why shouldn't I? What's it all matter, anyhow? What does anything matter to-day? It *is* topping to be out of Vienna, though." She stopped eating her sandwich and began humming to herself a waltz out of *Czardasfürstin* as she looked out over the plain.

Jimmy Randall rolled over on his side and stared up

at her. The hand in which she held her sandwich was very close to him, and he could not resist the temptation to kiss it. She drew back with a start. "You oughtn't to do that," she said, almost sharply. But at once she relented. "Still, you might have eaten part of my sandwich, which would have been a great deal worse. Although even that wouldn't matter much to-day, would it, Yimmy?"

"Jimmy," he corrected her.

"But it doesn't begin with a 'D.' Anyhow *I'm* going to call you 'Yimmy.' May I?"

He nodded happily. Arm in arm they wandered through the beechwoods. For one day they could neglect the buffetings of life. The world was their servant, not their master.

Nevertheless, when "Yimmy" came to say good-bye two days later because his news editor had telegraphed to him to go to Warsaw, Mizzi found it difficult not to cry. "I don't know what's the matter with me," she said. "I suppose I'm tired. Anyhow, courage will pull us through."

Jimmy Randall held her hand tightly in his. "You'll pull through all right. You *must!* You *shall!*" He glared defiance out of the office window at the streets of Vienna, at the sky, at Fate.

Ivan Deane, very conveniently, was out when the time came to say good-bye, and Jimmy Randall put his arm round Mizzi's waist. "Mayn't I kiss you good-bye? Just once?" he pleaded.

"*Streng verboten*," said Mizzi. "But every rule has to be broken some time, I suppose." So she let him kiss her, although she felt more lonely in consequence after the door had closed behind him. Courage, she told herself not very hopefully, would pull her through.

II

A few weeks after Randall's departure Josef Kränzler had a nervous breakdown. For some time he had been depressed and irritable, and three out of his five private pupils left him because he told them they had no more appreciation of music than three frogs—indeed, probably less. And one day when he ought to have gone to his café he sat at home composing a little piece rather after the manner of Ravel. The proprietor of the Café Stern telephoned to the *Kolonialwaren* shop underneath the Kränzlers' flat to ask what had happened to Josef, and received, in due course, the curt reply that Josef was much too busy to come. He was not to be appeased next day by explanations and excuses. He did not care one jot that Kränzler so seldom felt inspired that he could not afford to turn away inspiration when it came to him. He would give Kränzler one last chance; indeed, he might have to get rid of him anyhow, since fewer and fewer people could afford to come to cafés at all, especially now that the warmer weather made it possible for them to stay at home in their unheated flats.

Josef Kränzler began his day's work in a bad temper, which became decidedly worse when a band of thick-lipped, flabby profiteers came in and noisily ordered champagne. It was for swine such as these that one had gone through the war. While he could not afford to regain health and his power to create, these bloated brutes had nothing better to do than waste money on champagne in a starving city. When one of them made some condescending remark about his playing, Josef Kränzler lost all shreds of self-control. He dashed forward and swept all their glasses on the floor.

The champagne ran off the table in streams on to their fat thighs. He would tell them what he thought of them.

But he found he could not utter a sound. Instead, he felt tears in his eyes. He was tempted to hit out at one of these profiteers, but what was the use of it? He belonged to a beaten class. He dropped his hands helplessly to his sides.

The proprietor was shouting something at him. The fat *Schiebers* were gesticulating and cursing him with that insolence that the possession of money gives to people who are unused to it. Good old Hans, dear old Hans, the pianist, had his arm round his shoulders and was leading him quietly from the café.

"*Es wird schon besser gehen,*" said Hans soothingly. "You'll be all right when you get home. They're not worth worrying about, those pigs."

So Josef Kränzler lost his post at the Café Stern and was too ill even to try for another elsewhere. He sat, all day long, by the window of their kitchen dining-room, and toyed with the music paper in front of him or watched the quick flight of the swallows among the steep, tiled roofs outside. Mizzi could seldom persuade him to go out, for he disliked the bustle of the streets, and he feared that the melodies that were to assure his fame as a composer would flash through his mind when he was distracted by other things, unprepared for them.

Mizzi found her salary quite inadequate to keep the two of them. Josef ate voraciously, considering his nervous condition, and he never noticed how she stinted herself of this and that, for he was lost in his own thoughts, and she reduced slow eating to a fine art. Every now and then she managed to get extra work to do in the evenings, but the tapping of the

typewriter made Josef irritable and miserable. For two or three weeks she became a programme girl in a cinematograph, but the work kept her out too late and she did not like to leave Josef too long alone.

His fits of depression became terrible. He would sometimes realise that he was a burden on her, that he was doing nothing, achieving nothing. "Don't worry, dear," Mizzi would say. "A watched pot never boils. You'll compose as soon as you feel a bit better. You're tired, that's all it is. And you've got genius all right."

He would cling to her arm—sometimes cry—as he expressed his doubts. So that she had to soothe him like a baby. "Of course, you've got genius. Daddy knew it, and he was never wrong. Think what d'Albert and Weingartner and all these people feel about you. We'll be all right as long as you don't worry. Courage will pull us through."

He would feel encouraged, sometimes a little inspired. She would sit on the arm of his chair, wondering all the while how she was to buy bread, which had gone up three thousand crowns in a fortnight, how she could afford milk at 2240 crowns a litre, how she was to pay the rent, and where they could go if they were turned out of these three small rooms in the Schelling Gasse.

At the cinema plenty of men had made advances to her, and one of the other programme girls had told her frankly that she "picked up" men now and again to add to her income. "After all," she had said, "I've got an old mother to keep, and it's the only way of doing it."

Mizzi did not go under without a struggle. She spent evening after evening hunting for extra work that she could do at home, but such work was not to

be found. It was snatched up by other women of the middle classes, who still struggled to keep up appearances. Wives of doctors, professors, civil servants, who had somehow to make both ends meet. But Josef had to be kept. He was unfit for work himself, so she must help him. She had always protected him, spoilt him, slaved for him, since he was to be the great man of the family, the musician who had in his veins that divine fire that men call genius.

Casually, as it were, Mizzi found out from her friend at the cinema how she had set about this task of increasing her income. It was better to have a room, the girl explained, because one got a bad name if one went to hotels, and it was risky going with men who had flats in Vienna, since they might gossip. One could get a room by the month under an assumed name, and near the Bristol and other famous hotels of the Ringstrasse one might meet men who were passing through Vienna. It was a great advantage to talk foreign languages, and especially English, for the Austrians had no money. Men were beasts, of course, but more of them treated her decently than she had expected.

Mizzi answered advertisements in the papers and found a room which, as its blowsy proprietress explained with a leer, had a private entrance from the street. Courage, she said to herself. Josef must be kept somehow, and there was no other way. But many men spoke to her before she could bring herself to lead the way to her furnished room. As she hurried home to her brother she remembered Jimmy Randall's tone of defiance when he had cried: "You'll pull through all right. You *must!* You *shall!*" Poor Jimmy! Thank God he was in Warsaw. He'd never understand. How could he? He must never know.

She dared not even write to him lest he should guess that something was wrong.

Josef slowly grew better, and he seemed more contented. Sometimes she would come home, tired and disgusted, to find him playing things over at the piano. She was by far the better pianist of the two, and she would struggle for hours at his untidy music scores, while he would take up his violin, which had lain idle since he left the Café Stern, partly because he had had no courage to play and partly because the strings were so expensive that he feared to use it. It was always this hope of her brother's recovery which gave her new courage, but Ivan Deane wondered why he no longer heard her humming to herself as she worked in the outer office. "What's the matter, Mizzi?" he would ask. "You are so quiet nowadays."

She would shake her head. "Nothing particular. Things aren't always easy, but courage pulls one through." And while she remembered to do so, she would sing quietly to show that all was well.

Deane, however, received further proof that all was not well in the form of a long letter from Jimmy Randall. "It may surprise you," it ran, "but the more I think about it the more I realise that I'm seriously in love with Mizzi. I've never been taken this way before—although I imagined I'd been in love dozens of times—and I've got it pretty badly. Now be a sportsman and help me, as I'm awfully worried.

"Since I left Vienna Mizzi has written to me pretty regularly"—"The devil she has," thought Deane to himself—"and her letters have always been the cheery, courageous letters anybody knowing Mizzi would expect her to write. But a month ago she

stopped writing. I tried at first to kid myself it was owing to these cursed posts. Then I told myself some spy was bagging my letters, as does sometimes happen in this love-thy-neighbour-as-thyself Europe of ours. And to-day I receive the curtest little note saying that 'for various reasons' she thinks it better not to write any more. I'm pretty sure I've said nothing to offend her—indeed, she apologises for any sorrow her decision may cause me. What the deuce can it all mean? I won't believe she's the sort of girl who'd turn a fellow down for nothing. I had half thought of trying to get leave to come to Vienna, but, if you don't mind, I'd rather leave it to you to *tâter le terrain* and try to find out what's the trouble.

"It's no joking matter for me, old man, so do what you can.

"Yours ever,

"J. R."

Ivan Deane pushed aside his morning papers and called Mizzi into the room. "I've had a letter from Randall," he began, "and he's pretty upset about you. What's it all mean, Mizzi?"

Mizzi blushed furiously. "I'm sorry, Mr. Deane, but I can't say. But it isn't anything Mr. Randall has done. I hope he realises that."

"Well, what is it? I don't want to be indiscreet, but you're both friends of mine. Can't you tell me? Is it anything I can do?"

"Thanks very much. No, it's nothing, and I can't tell you. Please don't ask me."

"It's because of Jimmy Randall. He's very fond of you and he can't understand."

"Poor 'Yimmy,'" said Mizzi, and then, to Deane's considerable distress, she burst into tears. He patted

her awkwardly on the back, stroked the back of her bobbed head as though he were stroking a dog, and begged her to "cheer up." There was no doubt left in his mind that she was fond of Randall, and, knowing Mizzi, he guessed that in some way she was sacrificing herself as well as her "Yimmy." "You're *quite* sure I can't help," he asked her again. "Is it money? Do you want more money?"

Mizzi shook her head. "No, that's all right, thanks. You pay me more than you ought to as it is. I've talked to other secretaries and I know what they get. Oh, it'll be all right in the end, I suppose. Courage will pull us through, and I'm sorry to have made a fool of myself." She dried her eyes, and did marvels with a tiny powder puff and a tiny mirror. "I'd rather not talk about it just now," she said, "but, if you happen to be writing to Mr. Randall, I hope you will make it clear it's nothing he's done. I'm horribly sorry to hurt him, but I don't see what else I can do."

Ivan Deane wrote as reassuringly as he could to Randall, and advised him to "wait and see." Then he tried to concentrate on his work. The Austrian Chancellor, Monseigneur Seipel, had travelled from country to country in search of a loan, even at the expense of Austria's independence. Everywhere he had failed, and now at last there was talk of the whole problem of Austria being handed over to the League of Nations. Never before had international action on such a scale been contemplated, and Deane had plenty of work to keep him busy.

But he could not get the affairs of Mizzi out of his head. She was a quixotic sort of kid, and far too ready to think of others rather than of herself. She had to be helped to help herself. He was so sure that

she was behaving with excessive generosity that he decided to go to see her brother about her. One afternoon he gave her a long article to copy and declared that he was going out to attend a debate in the Reichsrat. He walked along the Ring until he was out of sight of his office and then turned off to the left and hurried through the narrow streets to the Schelling Gasse.

Josef Kränzler was at his table, which he had pulled over to the side of the piano, and he gave Deane no very warm welcome. "I'm hard at work on a symphony," he declared, "and it's awkward to be disturbed. But I suppose it's something important."

"It is," said Ivan Deane shortly. "It's about Mizzi."

Josef Kränzler pushed aside his work at once. Deane's voice had startled him. A few moments before he had looked flushed and tired, but triumphant in the knowledge that the pile of scored music sheets was slowly increasing; now the shadow of his old fears and old struggles fell upon him. What could be wrong with Mizzi? He depended so entirely upon her. Without her help his work could not go on, and nothing but his work mattered.

Ivan Deane had nothing definite to say. He explained the situation between Mizzi and Jimmy Randall, and his own uneasiness and Randall's alarm at the change in her. She had obviously some secret, and he wondered if Josef Kränzler could help him to find it out, since this secret seemed to threaten Mizzi's happiness. Was it likely to be a matter of money, because, if so, there might be ways of giving her a larger salary without her suspecting anything.

"It can't be money," said Josef, "because she's earning so much more now. You pay her so gener-

ously for overtime as it is. It might be that she's working too hard. You do keep her rather late at the office nowadays, don't you? Of course, I know it's necessary, but perhaps that's what tires her so."

"Overtime? I never pay overtime. Besides, Mizzi has not worked later than usual. She always goes at six."

"At six?" shouted Josef in astonishment. "But then why does she never come home before eight? And where does this money come from? You've not given her a rise?"

"No."

"And your friend Randall—he wouldn't have sent anything?"

"Of course not. I'm sure of it."

"*Komisch!*" said Josef to himself. "I don't understand it. And now you speak of it, Mizzi does seem sad. She always used to be singing, and now she never does." He suddenly became very agitated. "Where does the money come from? Tell me that. And why did she tell me she was working late for you? You're *sure* she's not?"

"Of course." Deane spoke almost brutally, for he was thinking more of Mizzi than of Josef. But in a moment he relented. "I suppose things are all right," he added. "I only thought you'd perhaps be able to help. I'm worried about Mizzi. She's too generous altogether. Too unselfish."

After Ivan Deane had gone Josef did not turn back to his music. Instead, he went over to the window and stood there, lost in thought. Where did the money come from? And why had she lied to him? He could not remember another occasion on which she had not been frank. She must be hiding something from him to shield him.

When she came home that evening he said nothing of Deane's visit, but he watched her closely, suspiciously. She undoubtedly looked tired and depressed, but how could even Mizzi be expected always to remain cheerful in these surroundings, in this dying city? He could not trust to his own eyes, for he could not tell to what extent his uneasiness caused him to exaggerate her dejection. There was something furtive and hunted about her which had never been there before. And she "made up" so much to give colour to cheeks that had grown pale. Where could the money come from? Where did she go when she left the office? In any case, he told himself, she must be working too hard, and on the following morning he swallowed his pride and called on the pupils he had insulted to beg them to start their lessons again. Two had been seized upon by other professors and the third said he had taken Josef's criticisms to heart and had decided to give up music. He called on his music publishers, but they could hold out no hope, and a few friends he visited knew of no work for him.

He returned to the Schelling Gasse nervous and dispirited, and fell again to wondering why Mizzi had lied to him. He *must* find out what was behind it all. His affection for her, distorted by his nervous condition, turned him into a spy, and one afternoon a few days after Deane's visit he determined to search her bedroom.

Trembling, he opened the door and went in. The room was smaller than his and badly lit. Even that he had never noticed before, so self-centred he had been. And a woman hated being cramped so much more than a man. She was always so unselfish, always sacrificing herself to help him. Where did that money

come from—the money he had been living on ever since he had left the Café Stern?

On her dressing-table, underneath a tortoiseshell hairbrush that was a relic of their former comfortable life, he came across a receipted bill for a month's rent. A month's rent of a bedroom in the Judengasse. It was made out to a Frau Lili Hofstetter, and in a drawer he found letters addressed to the same person. Letters sent to a newspaper kiosk and marked "To be called for." What were they doing in Mizzi's room? Why should they be addressed care of a newspaper kiosk? Such channels of correspondence were only—were only used by prostitutes. Why this receipt, these letters? What had Deane meant by suggesting that Mizzi was making such big sacrifices, and for whom could these sacrifices be made except for himself? Why had she broken with Randall, with whom she was supposed to be in love?

Josef Kränzler tore the letters out of their envelopes, and groaned aloud as he read them. They contained requests for another meeting, promises to send money, postponements of appointments—letters one might expect a prostitute to receive, letters which proved that his spying had succeeded only too well, letters which destroyed hope. He crumpled them up, threw them on the floor and stamped on them.

When he got back to the living-room he stood for a long time in thought near the window. His anger and amazement had gone, and he went over the events of the past few months with a detachment which astonished him even as he did so. Why had he been so blind? It was all so clear when one came to think coolly.

In the first place, Mizzi had made this sacrifice for him. He knew her too well to doubt this for a

moment. And, in selling her body to keep him, she had shut love out of her own life, for he felt sure of her feelings for Randall. He could picture the struggle she had been through—the realisation that he was not fit to work, the search for extra employment in the evening, the failure due to his own refusal to be left so long alone, the decision to become a prostitute. Poor Mizzi! he could realise the indignities she must have gone through and the extent of her sacrifice. What a petty thing his genius, his alleged genius, had become. It was owing to his music that his sister had taken to selling herself on the streets. Shame swept over him, and he cursed himself for his own selfishness, his futility. All these clustering houses that he could see—how many of them hid sacrifices to equal Mizzi's, selfishness to equal his? He leant his arms on the high window-sill and buried his face in them. But nothing could shut out the recollection of these ignoble letters.

III

In the *Neue Freie Presse* next morning Ivan Deane, always in search of material for telegrams to London and New York, came across an unexpected paragraph. "Tragic death of promising young composer," it was headed, and it announced that Josef Kränzler, who had won for himself an international reputation, had been found shot in his apartment in the Schelling Gasse on the previous evening and had died on his way to the hospital. There was little doubt, the paper declared, that the composer had committed suicide and, after a paragraph about Kränzler's work, it went on to refer to the plight of artists and intellectuals in Austria since the war.

Ivan Deane threw the paper aside and found a rattling taxi to take him to the Schelling Gasse. Mizzi was not there, but the police gave him the address of a friend to whom she had gone. She greeted him with a sort of indifference, as though she had not understood the extent of the new misfortune, but, when he explained haltingly his share in the tragedy, she pulled out of her pocket a note written in Josef Kränzler's trembling handwriting. "You'd better see it," she said. "You're my oldest friend now."

"My dearest *Schwesterlein*," ran the last scribbled words of Josef Kränzler. "I have at length realised what I owe to you. There is no way of repaying you, and I am so overcome by my shame at my own selfishness that I shall pain you still more. A nervous wreck like myself is of no use in the Europe the war has left us. There is no room for would-be artists in this struggle for bread and lodging, so that I go to follow all my friends who were killed. At least I shall not die mangled and torn as they died.

"Even now, you see, I can only write of myself. And yet, Mizzi dearest, I think all the time of the sacrifices you have been making for me. If only I had realised before! My end would probably have been the same whatever happened, for I could not have faced that awful café orchestra life again. But when I think of the misery and humiliations you might have been spared! Thank God, at least, that I can go while you are still young enough, fresh enough, to forget these last few weeks. I wish I could have seen you again, but I am a coward, Mizzi, and I am afraid my resolution may falter. If only I could tell you how proud I am of your shame, and how ashamed I am of my own selfishness and pride.

"Tell Deane that I thank him for his warning. And once again, *Schwesterchen*, forgive me for the pain I have caused you and the pain I must cause you now. God help us all.

"JOSEF."

For some minutes Ivan Deane stared at the shaky hand-writing. His own share in the business, even the grief of Mizzi, faded out of his mind as he thought of the thousands of tragedies such as this that had followed the war. . . .

He seemed to be lying in a sleeping-car, and when he awoke early in the morning he could see, through a gap in the blind, a great plain. He was travelling from Bucarest to Ostende, and he had lost touch with time. In the morning sunshine he could see whitewashed farms dotted here and there. Near at hand two white bullocks drew a plough through the rich soil, and a peasant tramped behind, while a little boy walked by his side and tried to guide the plough. Deane could not remember if he was in Austria, France or Germany. Everywhere were the same white farms, the same patient peasants tilling the land, the same cycle of winter, spring, summer and autumn. Beside these things how futile seemed the many squabbles between men of different race but of the same human family, with the same passions, the same joys, the same ambitions and the same sorrows! These frontier fights and all the misery that followed them in places where frontiers were nothing more than arbitrary lines drawn on maps by harassed politicians! A strip of tilled land, and that was all. A strip of tilled land on a wide, sunlit plain. . . .

Mizzi recalled him to her own little tragedy. She was talking about Josef and his music, about her own

plans and difficulties. "Now, at any rate, I had better tell you what I could not tell you before. I suppose you've guessed from this letter, even if you hadn't guessed before, that I have been a prostitute. No, there's no reason why I shouldn't say so. It's the proper word. And I've got excuses. I'm not ashamed. I'm sorry for myself, and I suppose in a way even that's mainly vanity—too much pride in my body—but I'm not ashamed—I didn't see what else there was to do." Her fear of bursting into tears gave her an air of defiance which she was too numbed and too unhappy to feel.

"But your brother . . . why didn't he . . ." Deane was searching for his words, when she interrupted him.

"No, you mustn't criticise Josef. *Please* don't think ill of him. How could he have guessed? I hid it so carefully from him, and he was so taken up with his work. Besides he wasn't fit to earn his own living. He *was* a genius, you know. Oh, if only he'd never found out! Poor old Josef! Life was pretty hard on him. That cursed war!"

"Pretty hard on you, too," put in Deane. "Do you realise what you've been doing? I mean—oh, damn it, Mizzi, I'm not much of a moralist, and I don't expect people to be morally black or morally white like people in cinema plays—they're most of them just different shades of grey. But I can't imagine *you*. Oh, I don't know. Although I confess that once or twice, after I'd talked with your brother, I rather wondered. And then slanged myself for wondering."

"But you must see, there wasn't any choice. Anyhow, now it's all over, that's one good. . . ." She stopped short and bit her lip. "What am I to do

now? I tell myself with courage it will be all right. But what's the good of courage now? There's nothing left." Mizzi's strength suddenly gave out, and for a long time she lay in Ivan Deane's arms, while he rocked her clumsily to and fro and tried to comfort her. "Poor 'Yimmy,'" she sobbed to herself. "Poor 'Yimmy'."

IV

Jimmy Randall received by the same post a letter from Mizzi and one from Ivan Deane. Mizzi's so upset him that he paid very little attention to Deane's. She wrote very briefly of her brother's suicide, but more fully of its cause, and, in her desire to leave him complete freedom of decision, her account sounded almost cynical. "When we met, you had, of course, no idea of the kind of woman I was, or, rather, was about to become. While my brother was alive I could not tell you, but I felt the only thing I could do was to stop writing. My silence and my letter suggesting that we had better have nothing more to do with each other are surely explained by the fact that I had become a prostitute. The necessity for prostitution has now passed and I am certainly not tempted to continue. I only say this because I have still some self-respect left, but I realise it can have no interest for you. I am very sorry indeed for any pain I have caused you. The best thing you can do now is to forget all about me."

"Mizzi has made immense sacrifices," wrote Ivan Deane. "I was horrified when I heard the whole story, but more and more I realise how much she must have suffered. I think she's been splendidly brave."

The words had no effect on Randall. "What is it to me?" he asked himself. "Am I not suffering, too? Why could not the brother work and keep himself? She ought never to have done it. Never, in any circumstances." He paid very little attention to the rest of Deane's letter, and he wrote a curt and almost reproachful reply to Mizzi. No doubt she had acted for the best, he agreed, but the news had given him a great shock. He could not write at any great length now, as he wanted time to think things over. On the whole, it would be just as well if they ceased corresponding, at any rate for the moment, but if she was in need of money or other material help, he hoped she would let him know.

Mizzi wept over Jimmy Randall's note in private, but in the office she held her head high, and was more efficient than ever. Deane was just writing a book, and she begged him to let her type it in the evenings, so that she would not have too much time to herself. She felt horribly lonely. She had not, during these dreary weeks, very much to look forward to, but she was not going to be beaten. Courage would pull her through. She was determined that it should, and she shut everything out of her thoughts but her work. Deane watched her anxiously, for the contrast between the cheerful Mizzi of six months ago and the determined Mizzi of to-day was such that he could not but notice it, although he seldom reacted to changes in people whom he saw day by day. Once or twice he thought of writing to Randall again, but his fear of emotional crises combined with his reluctance to interfere in the affairs of others paralysed his pen, and the hot, dusty summer months dragged by uneventfully. He sent Mizzi away for a holiday to the Tyrol, but she came back as pale as ever and, seeing her after

an interval of ten days, he realised how artificial was her interest in her work and how much courage she needed to pull her through.

V

Jimmy Randall had a busy time in East Prussia, whither his paper had sent him to investigate alleged discoveries of large stores of arms. He found the East Prussian a very different individual from the more easy-going Prussian of Berlin, and his search for information gave him very little time for thought about his personal affairs. He tried hard to thrust the memory of Mizzi out of his mind, but so many incidents and objects made him think of her that he showed an industry and an energy in his work which delighted his foreign editor. As soon as the German arms scare had ceased to be "news" he was sent off to the Free City of Danzig to study the relations of the Poles and the Germans there, for foreign editors have a knack of showing appreciation for work well done by giving more work to do well with as little delay as possible. His own particular foreign editor also saw that £50 was added to his salary, but even this did not greatly comfort Jimmy Randall.

If he went by train to Zoppot to bathe, all these red-brown people who strolled up and down the pier made him wonder how Mizzi was getting on in the heat of Vienna. If he went to dine at the Metropol Diele, the orchestra would recall to him the Café Stern, and the Café Stern would recall to him Mizzi's sacrifice for her brother. A clump of beech trees

served to remind him of their day in the Wiener Wald. With officers of the Allied garrison of occupation he haunted the cabarets which alternated with cemeteries along Napoleon's road to Oliva, he danced at the Danziger Hof, he wandered round the old streets of the city with two guide books, one packed with German and one with Polish propaganda. But, do what he would, he could not forget Mizzi.

One evening, as he was crossing the Bahnhof Platz a bedraggled girl accosted him, and he imagined he saw in her some faint resemblance to Mizzi. Supposing she were ever to come to this! It was all very well for her to talk of courage, but how could the courage of one person avail against the forces of evil, hatred and passion that had been let loose by the war? She had so little to live for now that her brother was dead. He realised, for the first time, how much she must have loved her brother and believed in his genius. In his room in the "Deutsches Haus" he read again her letter and Deane's. The two were complementary. Deane's explained Mizzi's sacrifice in a way which Mizzi herself could not do. It emphasised her devotion, her self-abnegation, and it left no doubt as to how much it must have cost Mizzi thus to throw away her chances of seeing more of "Yimmy." Her letter was not cynical, as he had at first believed it to be, but restrained and curt. And it was restrained and curt because she was too fond of him to try to make light of her actions. He had been thinking so much of himself that he had forgotten about her. What, he asked himself, was his suffering compared with hers? And how much he must have added to her suffering by breaking off his correspondence with her! Even if he were only an ordinary friend she would be needing his encouragement now.

Jimmy Randall ordered a black coffee and sat down in his bedroom to write to Ivan Deane. "I've tried hard to forget all about Mizzi," he scribbled, "but it's no good, and the only result has been that I have acted with a selfishness which amazes me, although I know myself better than most people do. I am telegraphing to London to ask for leave, and shall come to Vienna as soon as I hear from you and have fixed up a few things here. How is Mizzi? Is she still with you? There should just be time for news from you before I leave, and I will wait to hear, in case by any chance things have gone altogether wrong." The words "things have gone altogether wrong" he crossed out until they were illegible, for they seemed disloyal to Mizzi, and he wrote instead: "you think, for any reason, I had better not come for the moment."

In due course Deane sent his reply in that almost unintelligible language "telegraphese." "Delighted your change mind mizziwards who still working office," he wrote. "Stop. Greatly depressed as unbelieves youll forgive so sooner you upcheer her better." The telegraph clerk examined the message sadly, thinking how useless were the English lessons he had at school, but he sent it on its way in time to catch Randall, just as he had decided that he could not wait for news. Meanwhile Deane had been to tell Mizzi, who seemed to be furious with him.

"Just when I was getting resigned to this new existence, you open up all the old trouble, all the old uncertainties," was the burden of her complaint.

"But you're still fond of him, aren't you?"

"What if I am? Just *because* I am I don't want to see him. He'll despise me. He's a long way away and absence makes the heart grow fonder.

When he sees me again he won't be fond of me any more. Especially now I've grown so scraggy." She contrived to look at herself in her minute mirror and apparently obtained no comfort from it. "I daren't face him. Really, I can't. He'll never forgive me."

"Nonsense," said Deane with rough kindness. "Besides, to quote you against yourself, courage will pull you through."

"I wonder if it will," said Mizzi. "And I wonder if I've got enough courage left." She looked very doubtful, but Deane heard her, a little later, humming to herself some cheery tune out of "*Faschingsfee*." And she allowed him to persuade her to meet Jimmy Randall at the station.

An hour after his arrival the two came into the office. "Mizzi thought she'd take the day off," Randall declared after he and Deane had thumped each other on the back as old friends do.

"Only if you're not very busy, Mr. Deane," put in Mizzi. "If there's a lot of work . . ."

"Oh, work can go to blazes," declared the industrious Jimmy Randall. "In fact, I'm afraid you'll have to get a new secretary anyhow, as Mizzi thinks she'd like the climate of Warsaw. She won't, but she's going to try it. With me."

The two wandered off to the welcoming darkness of the nearest cinema, leaving Ivan Deane at his desk. Before him were two cables, one from London and one from New York. "Mail immediately thousand words position austrian factory industry," ran one. "Interview immediately Princess Bralinski hotel Bristol who alleged negotiating sale portion tsarist crown jewels," ran the other. As he slipped a telegraph form into his Corona typewriter he thought of Jimmy Randall.

"Lucky devil," he murmured. "Doesn't deserve it."

"Click, click," answered his typewriter, as the first words of his interview appeared on the telegraph form.

Room One

Room One

I

DOUGLAS HARDING'S first meeting with Olga Fyodorovna Bielorussova took place an hour after his arrival in Genoa to "cover" the International Economic Conference for the *Daily Wire*. His cab-driver was having a heated discussion with an officious *gendarme* who insisted that they must make a *détour* round by the harbour, apparently lest the appearance of so dilapidated a cab in the Via Balbi might offend the eyes of the delegates on their way to conference in the Palazzo Reale, when Harding heard his name called from across the road. A moment later, Ivan Deane had joined him, had, by the production of a mysterious pass, satisfied the *gendarme*, and was explaining to what remote spots Fate, and his foreign editor, had driven him since his last meeting with Harding.

The cab jolted down the Via Balbi, where every few yards stood *carabinieri*, with their Napoleonic

hats, directing foot passengers in the way that they should go. With the gesture of stage Napoleons on the field of Waterloo, they compelled people going down the road to troop along one pavement, and people going up the road to troop along the other pavement. The pavements were narrow, the *carabinieri* were numerous and large and the resultant confusion amused Douglas Harding, who had a healthy contempt for the bureaucracy and State institutions of all countries except his own. He was only half aware of his companion's gossip until the cab stopped with a jerk outside the Hôtel de Gênes.

"Come along," said Ivan Deane, "let's run up to Room One and see what's what."

"Yes, but what about my luggage, and what's Room One, and I'm not shaved."

"The luggage can wait, and they like you better in Room One if you aren't shaved. Come along, my lad, it'll amuse you."

He disappeared into the hotel and Harding followed him along a corridor, up the stairs and into a large room full of smoke.

Room One at the Hôtel de Gênes was a disturbing room. It had been—probably still was, for there were two beds behind the screen, under an odd jumble of newspapers, clothes and documents—a bedroom, and it was now the reception-room of the delegation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the Genoa Conference. The windows were closed tight, as though in fear lest the warm enervating air, with a touch of *scirocco* about it, might soften the Bolsheviks in their hostility to happy-go-lucky capitalist democracy. One could scarcely see across the room, so thick was the smoke, and such cigarette ends as could

not be crowded on to the ash trays or on articles of furniture strewed the red carpet. In one corner was a cyclostyle machine, before which a kneeling girl in an inky apron was preparing the daily protest of the Bolsheviks against some new failure of the Western European Powers to behave themselves politely. The basin on the wash-hand stand was filled with a mixture of purple ink and water that made Harding think of the blood of some loathsome caterpillar—a caterpillar with soft, unhealthy white flesh, like that of the large capitalist who stood near by, trying to persuade a very junior member of the Russian delegation that he should be granted colossal concessions in the Donetz Basin. Two or three Communists by profession, with their clothes as carefully disordered as the books and ornaments in a Putney drawing-room, lounged about picturesquely and discussed Poincaré, the women of Genoa or "Das Kapital." Others, Communists by religion, wrote at odd tables behind ever-growing piles of cigarette ends, or gave information, with the politeness of tired shop-walkers, to the journalists, male and female, who predominated in Room One. "Yes, our latest Note to the Allied Powers? The French text on the chest of drawers, the English text on the sofa over there, near the Japanese gentleman talking about Saghalien."

Douglas Harding found himself left a stranger in this topsy-turvy room, for in some miraculous way Ivan Deane had managed to disappear into the inner chamber, the holy of holies where Rakovsky, Litvinov and Tchicherin were to be found. "One moment," he had said to Harding, "only one moment," and then the closing door had shut him off from the envious looks of those journalists who were not fortunate enough thus to be invited into the presence of these

gentlemen, to whom London editors were still wont to refer as " blood-stained Bolsheviks."

When the " one moment " had become half an hour, Harding thought of his cab and luggage. He had better get to his hotel for a bath and a shave. He scribbled a suggestion about lunch on his card and then looked round for someone who could give it to Deane. Most of the journalist occupants of the room were obviously too migratory to be trusted, the various secretaries were too busy discussing concessions with capitalists, and the girl with the cyclostyle was too inky. Another girl was typing, her machine perched rather precariously on a night table, and a third, whom Harding had not noticed before, was busy sticking little notices on what the hotel proprietor doubtless believed looked like Louis XV furniture.

Why had he not noticed her before? he wondered. She wore an undistinguished black overall and black stockings, but she was tall and slender and she looked for all the world like the de Predis portrait of Beatrice d'Este. She seemed sulky rather than aggressive, and Harding was terrified of aggressive women. He went up to her and asked her rather diffidently to give his message for him. As he did so, he read almost unconsciously the typewritten lines on the labels she was pasting up with so much industry. On each of them in English, French, German and Italian were the words: " Please take away nothing without asking for it."

This reminder, in a Communist office, to the journalistic representatives of the bourgeoisie was so unexpected that Harding laughed aloud. For a moment Olga Fyodorovna looked annoyed, but his amusement was so clearly without malice that she, too, smiled. Although neither was what the Americans

call "a good mixer," they entered upon a conversation which lasted until Ivan Deane reappeared from the inner room, and, before that happened, Harding had made a complete tour of Room One with Olga Fyodorovna, her labels and her pot of paste.

II

In the luxurious special train which took the delegates to and from their hotels at Nervi, Santa Margherita or Rapallo, Olga Fyodorovna paid little attention to an important article by Lunacharsky in the *Pravda*, and none at all to the frank indecencies of Marya Petrovna Suhomlinskaya, the maiden of the cyclostyle machine, whose one delight in life was to make every man she met her abject slave by subtle appeals to his sexual appetite. Much of her gossip was, if rather shocking, highly amusing, but this evening Olga Fyodorovna found more pleasure in gazing out of the window at the Mediterranean and the villas and gardens of the Ligurian Riviera. How soft and attractive, how dangerously disturbing it all was! She wanted badly to know what Lunacharsky had to say on village schools, but somehow she could not divert her attention from this soil and sea of Italy—of a country which still talked with reverence of the mediocre Liberalism of Mazzini, which was fast falling under the domination of her enemies, the Fascisti, and their capitalist supporters. Had she travelled abroad before, she might have found the temptations of Italy less difficult to resist, but, after the flat plains and unfriendly forests of White Russia, the contrast was too great. In the evening sunlight, the red and yellow houses of Nervi, of Camaldogli, were warm and living, the sea was of old, beautiful metal, strangely calm for

a coast where the noise of the breakers is seldom hushed. She was almost frightened by the beauty of the contrast between the dark, erect cypresses and the gnarled olives, with their silver-green leaves. Here was no cruelty, no harshness, but only a friendly atmosphere which was as different as it could be from the atmosphere of Russia, where the cold froze the geniality out of a man. Her father, Fyodor Ivanovitch, had been an unimportant official in a little town near Bialystok until his political opinions had lost him his post and had gained for him instead an intimate knowledge of life in Russian prisons. Olga Fyodorovna had worshipped him as he had worshipped her, his only child. Everything he said she believed, and it was, therefore, not surprising that this girl soon won quite a reputation for herself among Russian revolutionaries. Her reputation, indeed, spread farther afield and, by the time she was twenty-one, she had been tried in the Bialystok courts and had sojourned in the Bialystok gaol. Her father had died, or so she imagined, in Siberia, and she had never known until now any other relaxation from the struggle against oppressors than the savagery of revolution and the thirst for revenge.

Olga Fyodorovna was undeniably attractive, but, strangely enough, although she could quote to you what every social reformer since Jesus Christ had said about free love, she knew nothing of free love or any other sort of love, except from books and conversations. Life had been so harsh and such a struggle that she had no time nor inclination to worry about virginity and sex complexes. She was as backward in love affairs as she was advanced in politics. A form of devoted pity for the serfs and the toilers of the cities, which had found expression in a bitter hatred

of the bourgeois, the capitalist and the aristocrat, had left no room in her for pity or love for the individual. Somehow this first visit to Italy was disturbing to her sense of values. The people were uninterested in the great international political movements, but there was a friendliness and a kindliness about their mere gossip which was oddly attractive.

The *carabinieri* at the gate of their hotel garden stopped the two girls and would only allow them to pass after much expostulation and explanation. Behind every pillar and every rose bush could be distinguished men in blue and red uniforms; for the Italian Government was running no risks, and the Bolshevik delegation in the Hôtel Imperial of Santa Margherita was guarded more carefully than would have been the Tsar of old. On the hotel steps, Olga Fyodorovna paused a moment and looked back. To the right loomed the great headland of Portofino, to the left were the villas on the road to Rapallo, out to sea rode an Italian battleship at anchor, the dusk hiding the guns which served by day to remind the Russians that they must comport themselves in accordance with the tenets of Western civilisation.

"Blasted fools! these capitalists," declared Marya Petrovna, with intense bitterness—her efforts to enslave the elegant Italian marquis who was attached to the Bolshevik delegation had not, so far, been very successful—"Damn them!"

Olga Fyodorovna agreed, but less emphatically than anyone knowing her opinions might have expected.

Somehow this atmosphere made one tolerant. Besides, that pleasant young Englishman had been the representative of a capitalist and reactionary paper. He was not like most of the other journalists, it was

true—he was shy and quiet, whereas the others were apt to treat one with rudeness and contempt, or, worse still, with that suggestive familiarity with which Russian nobles before 1917 had been wont to treat some pretty girl of the peasantry. He was better than most of them, this newcomer, but he was one of her enemies all the same.

Olga Fyodorovna went early to bed and lay reading the French newspapers, for she had to give her chief each morning a summary of the unpleasant things the French Press had to say about him. In one paper there was a story about "Bolshevik secretaries in silk stockings," who were alleged to wander in the gardens of the Hôtel Imperial. In the ordinary way she would have been furious at being confused with the two young *contessine*, whose family had been allowed to stay on in the hotel after the advent of Tchicherin and his delegation—the young countesses, however, with the one or two other guests, being discreetly separated from the Bolsheviks in the restaurant by a series of large red screens. But to-night Olga Fyodorovna thought of the Italian girls more in sorrow—or was it envy?—than in anger. In some vague way, she felt almost flattered. After all, they were both very pretty and they knew how to look attractive, which was their business in life. Hers was to be competent, efficient, useful to the Cause and dangerous to the smug bourgeoisie. She had no time to look pretty. Still, she knew that she attracted people, and it was not so offensive, after all, to be confused with these little Italian coquettes.

She stared awhile at the chair on which she had thrown her clothes in disorder. Her undergarments were made of Army calico, and she was lucky to get that. Her dress on anyone who was not so slim would

have looked like a sack. She wondered why that young Englishman had been so polite.

Down on the Rapallo road went an Italian singing some Neapolitan folk song in a rich, throbbing tenor voice. She thought of the folk songs of her own country, inspired by centuries of suffering, by hundreds of versts of harsh forest or of bleak plain. Then she thought of this queer passion which drove Marya Petrovna to such excesses. Confound Italy and its soft air! Confound that English bourgeois!

Then, while Italy and the bourgeoisie made love, drank or snored peacefully, she set herself to the long, but—to a Russian—ever-fascinating, task of analysing her own feelings.

III

Room One and Olga Fyodorovna puzzled Harding beyond words. He had never worried his head much about politics—and, indeed, had he done so, his telegrams would not have won the approval of his very go-ahead foreign editor. Men who were "top-hole" during the War became automatically "Reds" and scoundrels the moment they went on strike to obtain some of the advantages for which they had fought, and which all the politicians, from Lloyd George onward, had so glibly promised them. Russians who were allies until Kerensky's flight automatically became enemies under the rule of Lenin. Harding was astonished at himself for thinking so much about Olga Fyodorovna. She was so much better read and so much more intelligent than he was, and he spoke of her to Ivan Deane, who was almost his closest friend, with a sort of shamefaced admiration. How the devil, he asked Deane and himself, can so charming

and so clever a girl throw in her lot with these Bolshevik scoundrels?

As day after day went by, his political views became more moderate, or, rather, for the first time in his life, he began to have political views of his own. There were ample opportunities of visiting Room One, for here Rakovsky held forth each day. He was not then the suave and genial diplomatic representative of London and Paris, and, indeed, since "Bolo-baiting" was quite a fashionable sport, and since some of the correspondents asked him the rudest and most awkward questions they could devise, geniality would have been out of place. Rakovsky, being an historian and a man of wit, gave as good as he got, and he found no great difficulty in quoting precedents from the French Revolution for almost all that had happened in the Russian Revolution. Harding, whose sense of fair play would not normally have been offended by these onslaughts against the Bolsheviks, sometimes felt ashamed. Once or twice he apologised in a timid kind of way for the questions asked by his colleagues. He would echo some demand, but in such polite phraseology that all the sting was taken out of it, and when the morning's "Bolo-baiting" was over, he would protest and point out that "one had to play the game." Ivan Deane, who was no fool, especially when women were concerned, would glance across the smoky room to where Olga Fyodorovna sat at work and smile meaningly to himself.

But if there were many excuses to justify one's presence in Room One, there were few opportunities of talking to Olga Fyodorovna alone. When such opportunities arose, she would launch out into accounts of the sufferings of the poor and the steps which Lenin was taking to improve their lot. Harding was im-

pressed that she took the trouble to try thus to convert him. Of course, it was all nonsense. These moujik fellows had undoubtedly had a hell of a time, and even at home in England conditions were not perfect, but to talk Bolshevism to him—absurd! She would probably learn better when she grew older. And in any case she talked so charmingly and she was so terribly, so attractively, in earnest.

He refused an invitation to go with a cheery party to gamble at the Casino at Rapallo in order that he might attend the official reception given by the city of Genoa, and he was rewarded. He found there Tchicherin, Litvinov and the others, fully dressed up as capitalists, with tail coats and white ties, surrounded by scores of delightful young Genoese with autograph albums. Olga Fyodorovna, dressed neatly in dove grey, stood rather apart, half amused and half angry. She brightened up when she saw him.

"I came because I hoped you would be here," he said, and as he did so he felt an odd sensation of shame as though he had allowed himself to make advances to someone "not in his class"—or had been caught in the act of so doing by a brother officer or brother clubman. After all, he told himself, she was mixed up with these Bolsheviks and he must not let himself forget it.

He did, as soon as she smiled at him. With a little gesture of surprise or despair, she pointed to the autograph hunters. Why at one moment did they treat people whose political opinions were not their own as murderers and the next demand their autographs in albums filled with pretty sentiments? And the Commissars themselves, why must they hide their Bolshevik hearts under the starched shirtfronts of the bourgeoisie? In Moscow, Lenin lived almost the life

of one of his peasants, and here Lenin's colleagues put on special garments in honour of the Genoese !

" But you yourself are dressed up for the occasion," he ventured to point out.

She hesitated a second. " I suppose I am just as much of a woman as these others," and then, bitterly, " even if I am a Bolshevik."

He apologised and changed the subject.

" Let's get out of this. I have never had a chance of talking to you before. Let's go out into the garden."

But there was no secluded spot in the gardens, for the Genoese did not hold receptions attended by Tchicherin and Litvinov every night, and they were present in their hundreds to make the most of this one. Harding felt suddenly bold.

" I know; let's slip out and go to Deferrari's for a bit."

" What's Deferrari's ? "

Everyone in Genoa knew this famous restaurant by day and dancing-hall by night—everyone, that is, except this tall, fair Russian. Even she, however, was able to answer her own question.

" Oh, that dancing place on the Piazza Deferrari, isn't it ? I don't go to places like that."

Harding felt horribly confused. " But it's quite decent, you know. I mean, there are a lot of girls, of cocottes there, but there are all sorts of other women besides, from the delegations and all that sort of thing. It's really quite all right."

Olga Fyodorovna laughed. " Why, you don't think I worried about the cocottes, do you ? They are just the same as anybody else. It's not their fault—only one of the results of the capitalist system. But I don't generally go to places like Deferrari's. In fact,

I have never been to any of them. You see," she added with renewed bitterness, " I've never had much of a chance of a life of luxury and dancing. You forget you are talking only to Olga Fyodorovna, of the Soviet delegation." She sounded, he thought, rather pathetic.

" I say," he protested, " we're not all quite such villains as you believe."

" It isn't that you are villains, it is only that you don't think. It is lack of imagination that causes all the distress in this world. One half of the world, your half, has no idea how my half lives."

Harding had no desire to be brought into an argument, for somehow he felt he could not defend his own cause with much conviction.

" Do come along to Deferrari's for once and see how what you call 'my half' lives. Please do. Who knows when I shall get a chance of seeing you alone again ? " He pleaded like a child.

After all, why not ? People would not notice her absence as long as she returned in time to catch the special train back to Santa Margherita. Why shouldn't she have a good time when she had the chance ? She was suffering from a surfeit of politics and propaganda. It would be so delightful to forget all the misery she had seen and lived through just for a few brief minutes. She caught hold of his sleeve timidly. " All right, let's go. Only I must be back before midnight or I shall miss the train."

" A Russian Cinderella. You *look* like someone out of a fairy tale ! "

" We don't have many fairy tales in Russia nowadays," she said wistfully.

Deferrari's was crowded and brilliantly lit. At the entrance Olga Fyodorovna paused and half-turned to

go back. What had she to do in this *galère*? She had dressed carefully, but without coquetry. For the first time she felt acutely conscious that her frock was not quite up-to-date. Douglas Harding might not notice, but all these women would, and she so badly wanted to look nice to-night.

The manager, his eye still blackened as the result of a difference of opinion with representatives of the Anglo-American Press two nights previously, ushered them to a table before her nervousness could develop into panic. They were installed near the edge of the dancing floor, and Harding ordered sickly Italian champagne, *Cinzano brutto.* Then he jumped up. "Come on, let's dance."

"But I don't know how to. You see, I've never had the chance of coming to places like this. I only know the peasant dances of my country."

She was frightened and almost apologetic now. Apologetic because she had not the much-despised accomplishments of the much-hated bourgeoisie. Surreptitiously, under the table, she was polishing her finger-nails against the palm of her hand. Douglas Harding would be ashamed of her.

Poor kid! thought Harding, who had so much more experience of such places as Deferrari's than she had that he felt almost fatherly. What a rotten life she must have had! What swine the old aristocracy in Russia must have been—he knew he did not really believe this, but he had to blame someone for condemning a girl like Olga Fyodorovna to the life of suffering and revolution that had been hers. And, although she was new to all this sort of thing, she was easily the most attractive girl in the room. Other people thought so, too, and he caught himself glaring at a fat Venetian Jew who watched her too closely.

Some fellow-journalists across the room appeared to be joking about him and his companion. In the ordinary way he thought of these fellows as friends, but to-night he felt differently. Olga Fyodorovna had communicated some of her nervousness to him. It seemed as though he were called upon to defend her against the political or feminine malice of everyone in the room. Several people recognised her, and they appeared to be asking themselves what right this Bolshevik had in their haunts of luxury. The fact that she was a girl, and beautiful, made them more, rather than less, harsh. If she were to show her nervousness, they would sit there gloating sadistically. He felt profoundly sorry for her, profoundly ashamed of his class.

"Come on, I'm sure you can dance all right. It's only a case of walking around to the music." He must mix up with the dancers, hide her amongst them from the leerings of the onlookers.

She was very near to weeping. All her knowledge of political theories and production statistics—of what use were they to her now? And she could no longer pretend she did not care. She *did* care. She cared passionately. She *would* enjoy herself, as all these others appeared to do. Reluctantly she stood up; she must brave it out.

"Just let yourself go. I'll guide you all right." He held her very close to him so that she could make no false step. The orchestra was playing a slow foxtrot, which suited admirably her sinuous Russian movements. Excited by the novelty of this escape into a new world, by the glitter and laughter, by the proximity of Douglas Harding and by his admiring eyes fixed on her face, she danced, and enjoyed it. If there was no coquetry, about her, there was also no prudery, and her

body pressed warmly against his. Karl Marx, Lenin and the villainies of the Counter-Revolutionaries were forgotten. Only Douglas Harding, the orchestra and the *Cinzano brutto* existed.

Not all the other dances were so successful, but Olga Fyodorovna had, as it were, "made good" in this new atmosphere. She walked like an actress, as most Russians do, and the excitement brought a flush to her usually pale cheeks. Douglas Harding, who, a month before, would have agreed with anything that a clergyman or a member of the Carlton Club had said against the Bolsheviks, was absurdly in love with her.

In the taxi which brought them back to the reception in the Via Balbi he kissed her. For both of them it was stirring beyond anything they had known before. His desires were generally promoted by lust rather than by love, but to-night he was moved by something much stronger and much more beautiful than mere sexual passion. As for Olga Fyodorovna, in a world where there was so much wrong to right, she had never worried much about her individual happiness. Happiness was only for people who did not think, who could live for the moment. For the first time in her life she was living for the moment. She could not even think of the future except in a vague way, and it was Douglas Harding who had to plan their next meeting. M. Tchicherin was just as anxious as Signor Facta, the Italian Premier, to avoid disagreeable incidents, and the members of his delegation had, in consequence, very little liberty. They were dogged by detectives like kings and queens. The difficulty of planning further meetings made the present moment all the more precious.

IV

In the days that followed Harding told himself time and again that he was making a fool of himself, but his folly did not diminish for the telling. Olga's candour charmed and amazed him. She had no traditions of reticence to restrain her, but her frank passion had something so spontaneous about it that it contained no suspicion of nastiness. In the homeward train she no longer made any pretence of reading Lunacharsky and she told Marya Petrovna abruptly that she was bored by her smutty stories. When her chief called upon her to do some piece of work, she would reply "*Seichas*," which means "Immediately," and forget all about it. Vorovsky, the Ambassador in Rome, who had always admired her energy and capabilities, had to complain to Tchicherin of the muddles she made. She was an excellent worker, he explained, but she was changing in an alarming way in Italy. It would be just as well if she could be recalled.

Harding fared no better, for he quarrelled bitterly with Ivan Deane, who pointed out that, if he continued to neglect his work in this way, the *Daily Wire* would be making trouble. "Oh, go to hell and don't be a damned fool," he shouted one day, but as soon as Deane had disappeared, he took a telegram from his foreign editor out of his pocket. It made depressing reading. "Service unsatisfactory," it ran, "tinged with unexpected unwanted probolshevism. Change desirable. Henson."

What damned cheek, thought Harding. After all, he could not be expected to falsify the news. That sort of thing might be all right in war time, but just

because his editor had " run the bloodstained Bolshevik stunt " he was not going to send stuff that wasn't true. His righteous indignation might not have been so strong three weeks ago, but he did not know the Russians then. He was going to send what he believed to be the truth, and to the devil with Henson and his telegrams.

Unlike Olga Fyodorovna, he had no faculty for analysing his own feelings or actions. A very ordinary and not very clever Englishman, he had gained some success in journalism just because his foreign editor realised that what interested him would interest the majority of the *Daily Wire's* subscribers. Olga Fyodorovna opened up for him an entirely new field of thought. For the first time he realised that there was a great, underground movement of revolt, that something which was their due was denied to the millions who had gone to war. Like so many thousands of other young men, the armistice had left him *désœuvré*, at a loss to understand what all the fighting had been about. The misery of Central Europe after the Peace Conference had worried him, but not very directly, since these people who were suffering were not his people. He had no hostility, but also no feeling of friendship, towards them.

And now, through this Russian girl, he seemed to see a way out of all this chaos. The politicians who had allowed their countries to drift into war, the profiteers who had made money out of it, the trusts, the flag-wagging patriots who talked of their country, right or wrong—all these must be overthrown and a new order set up. Olga Fyodorovna appealed to him physically more than anyone he had ever met before, but her attraction would not have proved so strong were it not for the fact that, quite casually, by a

sentence here and there, she would, it seemed to him, illustrate the cause of, and cure for, some particular muddle in world affairs that had worried his subconscious mind for weeks. His desire for her was increased by the difficulty of seeing her alone, and for over a fortnight the two had to content themselves with little caresses in crowded Room One or with brief and furtive meetings in the hotel corridor.

Harding should have anticipated the blow, but it came as a complete surprise to receive a telegram from Henson telling him that, owing to his unsatisfactory service, he was to work as subordinate to Leslie, who was already on his way to Genoa. This was what came of writing the truth about Bolshevism ! He was so much in love with Olga Fyodorovna that he did not stop to ask himself if he had, indeed, written the truth. He would show these people what he thought of them. He hurried down to his hotel *concierge* and handed him a telegram in which he declared that he was not going to remain as second man to Leslie, but was coming home to see the editor. Then he went down to the *Casa della Stampa*, the Press Club, to look for Ivan Deane.

Deane came out of a telephone box, in which he had been dictating his despatch to his Paris office. He wiped the perspiration off his forehead with a large silk handkerchief, and led Harding upstairs to a fairly quiet corner of the room. At their table were only two people—a cartoonist who was finishing off a few caricatures of Lloyd George and Rathenau, and a Bulgarian journalist who was typing out some masterpiece on a borrowed " Corona." Neither man understood English, so Harding was able to tell his tale in comfort.

" I won't say ' I told you so,' " commented Deane.

" I'll confine myself to suggesting that you asked for it. And what are you going to do now ? "

" God knows. I thought perhaps you might have heard of something. I can't go on with the *Daily Wire*, and that's quite certain."

" Well, as a matter of fact, I have heard of a poor job, but it's a Radical paper, which would suit you better than the old *Wire*. It's the *New York Telegraph*, and the editor's in Paris, looking for a few people. Wants a second man for travelling jobs with headquarters in London. Think it would be of any use ? "

" Rather," said Harding, " but I couldn't go for a couple of days."

" Why not ? You may miss it if you don't."

" I couldn't. I've got something to settle up here first."

" You're a large-sized ass, Harding," commented Deane. " But I'll stand you a cocktail. Come along to the bar. If you go on like this, you won't be able to buy yourself a drink in a month or two, so you'd better make the best of me."

It was not until the following morning that Harding managed to let Olga know he had to leave. She received the news with mixed feelings. As a propagandist, she must be rather a success, since Harding proposed to leave his work on her account. But the fruits of victory were bitter. He would have to go away, and she could hardly bear the idea of his departure. It was almost a pity that he had been so conscientious in defending the policy for which she stood. If he could only have kept in with the *Daily Wire* and have stayed on. . . . No, this was almost blasphemy, for her Communism was her religion. Perhaps she could finish her self-appointed work and bring him completely over to Bolshevism, persuade

him to come to Moscow? But even this prospect was not quite satisfying. It was Harding as he was, and not Harding as he might be as a Bolshevik, whom she loved. He seemed to personify all this kindliness and sunshine she had discovered in Genoa, and she could not picture him in the dull joylessness of Moscow.

On the eve of his departure she stayed behind in the hotel on a pretence of illness. After most of the other members of the delegation had left Rapallo for Genoa for an afternoon session, she suddenly felt better, and insisted on taking the next train. But she avoided Room One, and went, instead, to Harding's hotel. He left his packing and hired a car. In the Via Venti Settembre they bought bread and sausage, fruit, cheese and wine. Then they drove out along the Rapallo road in the late afternoon.

She had grown so to love this stretch of sunny coast. It was intimately connected with Douglas Harding and the happiness he had brought her. In the car she leant her head on his shoulder, and he had both arms round her. To-morrow he would be on his way to Paris, and she would be alone to enjoy the happiness and warmth of the Italian Riviera.

They drank wine at a little *osteria* on the main square of Portofino. On three sides of them were old red or yellow houses, on the fourth was the harbour and its fishing boats. The girls washing clothes at the pump sang folk songs about pining lovers and faithless swains.

Near the ruin of an old castle by the sea, between Portofino and Santa Margherita, Olga Fyodorovna and Douglas left the car. They found a quiet spot amongst the ruins on a little promontory. Here they had their picnic supper, and then lay back on the grass and listened to the busy noise of the tree crickets. Olga Fyodorovna, having no conventions, had also no

shyness. Under the wide vault of the Italian sky, caressed by the soft wind of the Mediterranean, this virgin believer in Bolshevism surrendered herself joyously to the greedy hands and lips of this representative of the most violently capitalist and reactionary newspaper in the British Isles.

V

After Harding's departure Olga Fyodorovna felt more lonely than she had believed anyone could feel, and Vorovsky spoke again to Tchicherin. The sooner she could be sent away from the enervating atmosphere of Genoa to Moscow the better for the Cause. Tchicherin scribbled a word or two in his little notebook and began a discussion on the iniquities of Mr. Lloyd George and M. Barthou.

Ibsen once declared that one could not love mankind until one had loved one person. A week ago Olga Fyodorovna would have called Ibsen a fool; now she called him a sage. It was true she had given up much of her life to furthering the welfare of her people, but there was, she now realised, a vast gulf between "welfare" and "love." In Moscow the people were educated, clothed and washed, but they rarely smiled. Here she was affected by an atmosphere of intimate friendliness. Since departure from Russia and her meeting with Douglas Harding she had begun to realise that civilisation does not depend upon the excellence of theories, but upon the courtesy and good fellowship which exist between one citizen and another.

She had had enough of suffering. Why should she not make the best of life? Her body was made for caresses and admiration, and not for that indifference and neglect which result from a life of ungrudging

service to the mass rather than to the individual. She remembered little anecdotes of English life that Harding had told her and they made it sound immensely attractive. Even the sweet champagne of Deferrari's became in retrospect a wonderful nectar which once she had drunk with him.

Harding sent her illustrated post cards from London which she treasured almost as much as his scrappy, but devoted, letters, telling her of his quarrel with the *Daily Wire*, of his changed political opinions and of his new work in England. Sometimes she would buy English illustrated papers with their snobbish photographs of the aristocracy at play, and she would picture herself at some Society ball or theatrical garden party, with Douglas at her side. Everyone knew him, of course, smiled at him and wondered who this fair companion could be. She would stroke the sleeve of her shabby coat and dream of magnificent sables and caressing *crêpe de chine* undergarments and the deep softness of pearls. She wanted Harding's love and all these luxuries that she used so to condemn.

Tchicherin had not forgotten Vorovsky's suggestion. One day shortly before the close of the Genoa Conference Olga Fyodorovna was informed that she was to return to Moscow at once to take up an important post in the *Narkomindiel*, or People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. In ordinary circumstances she would have been delighted, for she had always wished to work in this department, but now the news seemed calamitous. Moscow was so terribly far from London. Vorovsky explained that she was to leave on the following day. Back to the gloom of Moscow! The weeks at Genoa with Douglas would become merely a dream. A dream so beautiful that it would make the reality of Russia unbearable. When Marya Petrovna

Suhomlinskaya and the others congratulated her on her promotion she could hardly keep back the tears. The emptiness of the life before her appalled her.

VI

The affair did not end with Olga Fyodorovna's departure for Moscow. Indeed, for once that absurd proverb, absence makes the heart grow fonder, proved itself more or less true; all the altruistic and unselfish side of Harding's character found encouragement in Olga's accounts of the hardships of Moscow. He read everything he could about Bolshevism, and he planned a visit to Russia. But when first he applied for a *visa* the Bolsheviks made difficulties, since he had until recently been working for so reactionary a paper, and when they were willing to grant him facilities, his mother fell ill and could not be left. The one night at Portofino meant all the more to him because it had been one night only, and the difficulty of seeing Olga Fyodorovna again seemed to strengthen his love for her and his respect for her opinions. Thus for a period his letters and hers brought them closer together.

But with the death of Lenin what remained of Olga's courage and convictions disappeared. There were intrigues between Zinoviev, Kamenev, Trotsky and the rest of them. The inspiration of the revolution had gone and it left a feeling of futility which even Harding's enthusiastic letters could not dissipate. They were filled with passages about social reform and revolution and other subjects which she had, as it were, imbibed with her mother's milk and which, now, meant nothing to her. He, in turn, was distressed that she sounded so envious of people who drove in luxurious cars from dinner to the theatre, from the

theatre to supper, and from supper to some place where they could dance until morning. Besides, as the months went by, he became so involved in politics that he had very little leisure for letter-writing. By degrees their companionship of the Genoa Conference was clouded and dimmed by little misunderstandings and bickerings, which, Olga felt, could only be dissipated if she could get to London. It was so difficult to explain things on paper. She must see Douglas face to face. Somehow she must go to England.

Rakovsky had just been appointed diplomatic representative of the Soviets in London and he might be able to help her. She applied for a post in his office, but the *Narkomindiel* would not allow her to go. She was deputy director of an important department, and could not well be spared. She volunteered to go on a propagandist mission for the Third International, but Zinoviev was no friend of hers and refused to help her. With each failure to get to Douglas and London, her desire for both increased, her work in Moscow became more hateful to her.

Early in 1925 an event occurred which frightened Olga Fyodorovna. Harding wrote that her letters, when they reached him, appeared to have been tampered with. This might possibly occur in England, he explained, but it might also occur in Russia. She made inquiries. For six months or more she had felt it advisable to entrust her letters to a Swiss business man rather than to the official post, since her grumbles about Moscow were not likely to make her popular there. She questioned the Swiss closely and he assured her that they were all smuggled safely out of Russia, until she threatened to inform the *Tcheka* about him. The bluff worked at once. The spies and terrorists of the *Tcheka* knew all about him, he

explained. If she was an *agent provocateur*, there must be some mistake, since this would mean they were colleagues. All her letters, and the letters from dozens of other people whose postman he pretended to be, were only sent abroad after they had been examined by the henchmen of Djershinski.

A person in her position could not afford to be suspected by the Secret Service, and she could only make further inquiries with caution. Nobody must know why she wanted to leave Russia. Douglas alone could help her, for he was a journalist, and journalists were all-powerful. Without him she could not get a *visa* to enter England. Even if she managed to leave her own country and to get across Europe, she would not be able to reach London unless she could prove she had a post awaiting here there. Douglas must come to her aid and get her a *visa*.

But how to get in contact with him ? She must run no risk this time of having her letter intercepted. She was becoming nervous and suspected traps where there were none, spies of the *Tcheka* where were friends who would willingly have helped her. She wasted weeks in making her plans, and, as each week went by, her hatred of her present life grew. Once out of Russia, once with Douglas, she would have luxuries and champagne, jewels and Paris frocks—everything that Tsarism and Bolshevism had kept from her.

An opportunity came to her through a young English journalist, Bentley, who was living in the Hôtel Savoy, the Soviet official "guest house." He visited her from time to time to get statistics and other information, and she realised that he came more often than was necessary, that he was in love with her —not "in love" as she had understood it with Douglas, but rather that he wanted her body. For

the first time in her life Olga Fyodorovna deliberately played upon a man's passions, and young Bentley agreed, in due course, to take her letter to England when he went on leave. Douglas, learning how things stood, would come to her help. She would go to Paris and wait there while he arranged things.

With the back of her hand she rubbed the memory of Bentley's kisses off her lips. They belonged, her lips, to Douglas alone. She stretched herself happily. Douglas would help her. She was never going to worry about Marxism or Bolshevism or Capitalism again. She would only live for herself—herself and Douglas.

VII

While Olga Fyodorovna speculated on the rapidity with which Douglas Harding would use his great influence to bring her to England, that gentleman stood between two plain-clothed detectives in his office in Bloomsbury, while other policemen collected, carefully and uncomprehendingly, all the papers on his desk. *Red Revolution*, the paper he had founded six months ago, was under sequestration.

In one drawer they came across a large bundle of letters neatly tied up with red tape.

"Give those to me, please," begged Douglas Harding. "They're private. Nothing to do with the office." He stretched out his hand for them.

"Oh, no, you don't," said the policeman. "Them's evidence."

"Damn you, give them to me." Harding lunged forward to grab Olga Fyodorovna's letters. There was a violent scuffle, but at the end of it one of the policemen, with a dexterity that could only be the result of long practice, slipped handcuffs on his wrists.

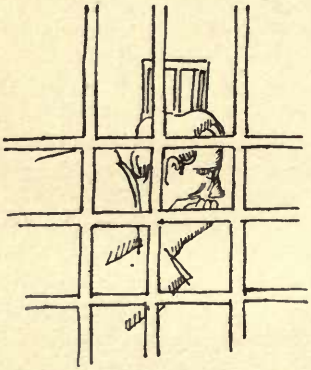
"Now then, will you keep quiet?" he demanded.

He studied the bundle of letters. "H'm, very suspicious. Written in some foreign lingo. Must be Russian."

An inspector took the packet from him and studied it in his turn. "That's French," he declared with immense superiority. "'Moscou' is French for Moscow." His subordinate stared at him with admiring respect.

"If you've got everything, we'd better be moving," declared the inspector. He turned to his prisoner. "Now," he asked, "will you come quietly?"

Douglas Harding gave no reply. He thought of Olga Fyodorovna, whose example had for so long been his inspiration. It seemed to him, for a fleeting second, that he could feel her lips against his, and he made a movement with his linked hands as though to stroke her slim body and firm limbs. If only she could see him now, how proud she would be! He took a last look round his office, and then, head in air, walked out into the street in the company of the police.



Reconciliation

Reconciliation

FRITZ WERNER lay in a ditch by the roadside and waited. The agonising pain of the first half hour had given way to a numbness which was almost pleasant by contrast. As far as he was concerned, his legs had ceased to exist. How badly he was wounded he did not know, and he purposely turned his attention to other things. For a while he worried because the unceasing stream of men that passed him along the road flowed in the wrong direction—back from the Wesel front towards Essen—but, by degrees, his distress at this retreat diminished. After all, why worry which way the poor, weary devils were going? He had seen so many advances and retreats, so many ragged, muddy soldiers. With a great effort, and a new stab of pain up the whole length of his spine, he turned his head away from the men on the road so

that, instead, he could see a patch of watery blue sky and the side of the ditch in which he lay. Someone had propped his head on his overcoat, his old, patched military overcoat which had served him so well since the war, for it was made of good army cloth, and not of an ignoble mixture of rags and paper like the civilian overcoats that were bought, with infinite sacrifice, by clerks, Government officials and professors. Paper overcoats, paper towels, paper tablecloths, paper seats in the railway carriages! An *Ersatz* for everything, even for bicycle tyres—from where he lay he could hear messengers hurrying past with despatches for the Headquarters of the so-called German "Red Army" on bicycles that rattled and rustled on the little springs that were fastened all the way round the rims to replace the pneumatic tyres of before the war.

Before the war! What an infinite time ago! It was difficult to believe that such a period had ever existed. It had become almost like those occasional mental pictures of recollection or revelation which seem to betoken a former existence. Was it possible that less than a decade ago he had wandered over this countryside, had strolled with some Lieschen or Gretel through the cherry orchards or along the banks of the Rhine? Soft spring mornings, packets of *Brötchen* and *Leberwurst*, glasses of cold and frothing beer drunk in old, low-ceilinged *Gasthäuse*, and, always, folk songs or student songs, to keep everyone cheery and good-humoured.

This would never do! He was growing sentimental, and what had a dying man in a ditch to do with sentiment? He was such a minute cog in such a mighty machine that he could drop out without being missed. It was almost comical to think how little one really mattered. Here he was, forgotten in

his ditch, and an hour or two ago he had seemed so important in his rôle as commander of as strange a company of soldiers as he had ever seen. Some of them wore old, field-grey tunics and some wore ordinary civilian coats. Some had army breeches and some had shabby office trousers. His only subaltern, a baker's assistant in private life, had an odd-shaped bowler hat and his sergeant-major had been given his rank less for his military ability than for his smart military cap, "scrounged" during the first few days of chaos after the armistice in 1918. His own boots were fine Russian boots that he had inherited, as soldiers do inherit these things, from a dead Russian officer in Galicia.

Fritz Werner had been so proud of those boots, so thankful for them in the mud of the Ruhr and the cold cheerlessness of his own bed-sitting room in Düsseldorf. And now he did not even know if he still possessed them. Quite possibly someone else had already inherited them in his turn. Or the shell that had hit him might also have destroyed his boots. Having no feeling below his hips, he had no certainty as to the existence of his beautiful Russian boots. That was what came of stealing some poor devil's belongings. Some poor devil of a Russian. He could remember the boy quite distinctly—horribly mangled by a German shell, but still quite easy to identify as one of those excessively elegant aristocrats whose only guilt in the war was his careless ignorance of what the Russian Government was doing. At the time he had felt no sympathy for this young officer, and later, when he had "turned red," he had almost hated him as a representative of Tsarist Russia which, in his opinion, shared with Wilhelm II the responsibility for the war. To-day, for the first time, he thought of the former owner of his boots with infinite pity. He had

looked so young to be strung up, like some awful scarecrow, on the German barbed wire. Caught there like some piece of tattered rag. A human rag.

Before the war Fritz Werner had talked enthusiastically of Tchekov and Gogol, but when the Russians had threatened to sweep through East Prussia on their way to Berlin he had learnt to hate them. His first experience of fighting had been at the Battle of Tannenberg, after a week in reserve in the pleasant woodlands of the Masurian Lake district. He had hated the Russians for invading this peaceful German land, just as, at the behest of German newspaper and German generals, he had hated England for coming into the war when Germany believed she would remain neutral. He had never worried himself about the invasion of Belgium, for he believed that Germany had been treacherously attacked on both flanks and must adopt any and every means of defence to save herself from her enemies. Throughout the war he had been convinced that the Germans were struggling for liberty against their jealous rivals. As a boy he had spent four months in the Isle of Wight, which was nearly as popular as Capri among Germans, but when the war came he knew, or thought he knew, that the welcome he had received there had been part of a gigantic British scheme to dispel German suspicions while the destruction of Germany was being planned.

After the Versailles Conference his sentiments had changed again. The British, he had realised, had been led astray by the French. Despite their blockade, which no German could ever forget, they were more or less willing to let bygones be bygones. It was the French who were trying to ruin Germany, and the British who, in a half-hearted way, were trying to save her. Until he had realised how this desire for

revenge in Germany was endangering the Weimar Constitution of the German Republic, he had cordially detested the French, and his detestation did not greatly diminish when he came to regard M. Poincaré as an enemy of international co-operation rather than as an enemy of Germany alone. Besides, so much of the blame for Germany's situation was due to the Germans themselves—to the Nationalists for their insane schemes for abolishing the evil effects of one war by another war, to the Social Democrats for their cowardice and their inability to forget personal ambitions and petty jealousies, to the Germans as a race for their horrible obsequiousness to anyone who kicked them. He had thrown in his lot with the Communists in the Ruhr only since the Kapp "Putsch" a few days ago. Kapp and his friends had tried to overthrow the German Republic to re-establish the Monarchy, and, although the Republic was a feeble sort of affair, it was, Fritz Werner had decided, worth fighting for. Having defeated Kapp, the Government had turned against the Communist Red Guards who had supported it and was proceeding to wipe them off the face of the earth. Fritz Werner had at once volunteered. He had been rushed out from Essen in a motor lorry, packed with other Red Guards and Red Cross nurses, to defend a sector of the Wesel front against the *Reichswehr*, the Government troops. The Red Guards were hopelessly outnumbered and, although most of them swaggered about with hand grenades hanging from their belts, hopelessly outarmed. They had fought desperately and their house-painter Commander-in-Chief, from his General Headquarters in Mülheim, had tried to be strategical and brilliant. But along the road stumbled the retreating German Red Guards, and here he lay in a ditch waiting for some car to take him back to hospital in Essen.

And all this was due to nothing but hate! What almost superhuman sufferings mankind had been through at its dictates! Would he, for love or for ambition, ever have spent years in the mud and rain and discomfort of the trenches? Ever since 1914 hatred had been the driving force of his life. Hatred for the Russians, hatred for the British, hatred for the French, hatred for the Poles and the Czechoslovaks and the other new or renewed countries which owed their independence to Germany's downfall. And now hatred for his own compatriots of the advancing *Reichswehr*. No, that was wrong. Not now. An hour ago, but now he felt no hostility towards these troops who, after all, were only carrying out the orders of their Government. Poor brutes! Probably they didn't enjoy it either. Some of them obeyed because they were in the habit of obeying, but others might obey because they believed that in so doing they were fighting for liberty. Liberty? Nonsense! There could be no liberty where there was no tolerance, and there could be no tolerance where were fear and hate.

Never before had he paused to analyse this passion which had gripped him for so long. But, lying in his ditch, he suddenly asked himself what good it had done him? This hatred had done nothing but poison his existence, and the realisation that it was so was a revelation to him. That poor Russian boy hanging like a rag on the German wire—what was the use of hating him? Did it reflect to the credit of a man to hate another man, another party, another Government, another people? Probably the Russian boy had felt no hatred himself, for, like millions of others who had gone to the war, he had been too busy fighting, eating, singing, loving. . . . He thought of the thousands of mothers who had worked and prayed

for their sons from their birth, and these sons had died, so many human rags on the enemy wire. Damn it all, he was growing sentimental again, and it was sentimentality that was the worst failing of the German, that had made him so easy a victim of the first militarist who talked of the magnificence of German "Kultur" and of the majesty of the German Kaiser. But do what he would, he could not forget these men, strung up like scarecrows to frighten birds and beasts and men . . . scarecrows whose lips women had kissed, whose lithe bodies women had loved. . . .

Fritz Werner lost consciousness for a while. When he came to himself again he was still in his ditch. As he waited, he stared at the bank at his side. Some lorry or cart must have crashed into it, for the earth had been newly crushed. At the top of the bank was a violet plant, with most of its roots uncovered. How fine and delicate they were! They seemed to stretch out like human limbs for a fresh hold on life. He hoped the plant would live—so much had died at the hands of man during the last few years. The half-withered, heart-shaped leaves suddenly seemed more important than any person he knew. Spring would be here in a few weeks and the violet ought to join in the harmony of colour that celebrated it. With spring came the cherry blossom—what was that thing an English girl had recited to him one day, on the downs above Totland Bay—something about cherry trees? Ah yes, he remembered now:

> "Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
> Is hung with bloom along the bough,
> And stands about the woodland ride,
> Wearing white for Eastertide."

It had reminded him at the time of his beloved cherry orchards along the Rhine. And what was it about the Rhine? Something that had worried him a

great deal. Why, the Rhine Bridgeheads, of course, the Allied occupation of so much of the Rhineland. How angry he had been, and how little it all seemed to matter now. The cherry trees, thank God, would still blossom, whoever claimed the Rhine—the cherry trees and the violets, the dandelions and the daisies. He felt almost like God in his detachment.

Up and down the blades of grass ran ants and spiders and vivid beetles and flies. All so busy, like so many human beings in a city street. Did they, he wondered, organise campaigns of hate like men did? Russians and Englishmen, Frenchmen and Germans. Surely not! They were so delicately and beautifully made, these minute insects. And yet that Russian boy had been delicately and beautifully made. A human scarecrow! Life crushed out of him by a mass of hot steel . . . crushed like an insect under a heavy boot. How silly it all was, this hate. Men, who were so proud of themselves, were like insects. He watched them, like God, like the God of Love instead of the God of the Old Testament whom he had followed for so long. Driven to this and that by childish whims and passions and ambitions. Surely they could not be held responsible for their actions—the Russian boy on the barbed wire, the torn roots of the violet plant . . . silly all this hate was!

> "And since to look at things in bloom
> Fifty springs are little room,
> About the woodlands I will go
> To see the cherry hung with snow."

He wondered if God ever tired of seeing things in bloom, youth in bloom. Perhaps that was why there was all this destruction? The Creator, tired of creating men and insects and fresh shoots of grass, swept them out of existence. Like a boy destroying his castle of bricks. . . .

Voices disturbed him. Men leaned over him, and he was terrified lest some boot might complete the destruction of the violet root. Why could they not leave him alone? He had finished with men; they interested him less than the violets and the insects. Why could they not leave him alone—their discussion worried him.

"We can't leave him here, anyhow," said one of them, in French.

"Of course we can't. But what about getting to the front? After all, our papers will be expecting something about the fighting."

The third man was, judging from his accent, a Belgian—Fritz Werner had been long enough in Antwerp during the war to recognise a Fleming when he heard one. "Come on," he said, "let's get him in the car."

The chauffeur agreed. He seemed to know enough French to follow the conversation.

"These cursed Red Guards, *diese verfluchte Rotgardisten*, what the devil do they expect if they try to make war on the Government? They'll get what they deserve. Still, we'd better get him back to Essen."

The second speaker stooped down and felt Werner's pulse. He grinned at him cheerily. "Soon be all right, old top," he said reassuringly in English.

"Old top." What did that mean? he wondered. Something friendly, anyhow. The journalist who had spoken first, obviously a Frenchman, was less genial, but his hands, as he changed the sodden bandages, were so gentle that Fritz Werner could not bear to show how much he suffered. The Belgian, who had, above all, reason to hate every German, signed to the chauffeur and together they carried him, with the greatest precautions, to the car.

For a time Fritz Werner remembered nothing. When he opened his eyes the Englishman was trying

to pour something down his throat. "Black and White," he said, "that's the stuff for the troops. Don't get that every day, do you?"

Fritz Werner watched these enemies with an understanding which would have been quite impossible in ordinary circumstances, when one's mind was poisoned by propaganda and prejudices. Even during these few days of fighting in the Ruhr hatred had been fanned to white heat by horrible tales of murdered prisoners and mutilated Red Cross nurses. With a strict censorship and careful propaganda, people could be persuaded to believe, or to commit, any bestiality. These tales filled him now less with indignation than with pity. He saw the Englishman, the Frenchman, the Belgian and the German supporter of the Government troops in their campaign against the Red Guards no longer as enemies, but as decent fellows with normal failings and normal kindnesses. They had altered their day's programme in order to bring him back to hospital, they had laid him along the back seat of the car, and the Belgian, perched on the collapsible seat opposite, was supporting his legs carefully, so that they should not be jolted against the side as the car crept over the *pavé*. The other two men sat up on the folded hood at the back so as to give him as much room as possible.

With an effort, Fritz Werner spoke. "Am I bleeding a lot?"

"Don't you worry," replied the Frenchman, de Caix. "You'll be all right when we get you back to hospital."

"It's not that. It's only that I'm afraid of making a mess of your things. I'd rather you put me on the floor. It wouldn't matter so much there."

This had to be translated for the Belgian, the principal person concerned, who knew very little

German. "*Cela m'est égal*," he said, and he smiled so jovially that he looked like some cheery villager in a Breughels picture.

The three men began to talk amongst themselves and Fritz Werner found their neglect of him oddly reassuring. It meant that he was considered as one of themselves, as a companion of de Caix, with his elegant, unfamiliar way of pronouncing familiar German names, of van de Vyvere, with his strong, invigorating accent, of Ivan Deane, who kept singing a silly song about going back to Alabama, just to see his Susyanna breaking up the happy little home, and then stopping short with an apology when he remembered the wounded man. A few years ago these friends would have been as delighted to shoot him as he would have been to shoot them. And now they were in a car all together crawling past the retreating Red Guards on their way to Essen. What incredible nonsense it all seemed!

Fritz Werner felt immensely happy and relieved. The pain was agonising and he would have liked to ask for some more whiskey to give him strength to resist it. But he felt too shy and humble to interrupt the discussion. With each jolt over the *pavé*, the throbbing grew worse, but he was not going to groan about it. "*Ich grolle nicht, und wenn das Herz auch bricht.*" In his university days at Bonn he had learnt never to flinch in a duel and he was not going to flinch now. Besides, there was something so transitory about it. It was so very unimportant in comparison with his peace of mind. Suffering did not hurt like hate, and he had no hate left in him. And one had so many companions in suffering. The Russian boy on the barbed wire had suffered, the violet crushed by the wheel of some lorry had suffered and yet life went on just the same. It was comforting to remember that.

The cherry trees would soon be in blossom all down the banks of the Rhine, the insects would still hurry through their brief, bright existence, the hatreds of to-day would fade as the hatreds of yesterday were fading. Life went on just the same. "Loveliest of trees, the cherry now. . . ."

De Caix saw his lips moving and leaned over him. "*Cela va, mon vieux?*" he asked.

Fritz Werner nodded his head and made an almost superhuman effort not to show how the movement hurt him. The conversation between his three friends droned on . . . the drone of insects on hot, summer days . . . stretched out on the grass watching the ants and spiders, the white clouds in their stately progress across the sky . . . the peaceful days before war and lying and hatred took the world in their clutch. But that was all over now. Here he was on his way back to Essen with his three enemies, who were now his friends . . . all over now. Fritz Werner smiled as he closed his eyes. In the moment of death he thanked God for the gift of life.

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